

2 PETER

EVERY EFFORT

2 Peter: Carried Through The Crisis

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2 Peter 2:1-21

Morning, Doxa. How are we? My name is Donald. If we have not met I'm one of the pastors on staff here at Doxa and I have the tall task of getting through 21 versus, the entire chapter two of 2nd Peter in just over 30 minutes. And so this is going to be a wild ride. We're going to cover a lot very quickly. I want you, if you have a Bible with you right now, open that up to 2nd Peter, chapter two. If you have it on an app, that's great, just I'd ask-throw that phone on airplane mode so we can focus in together and I'll say right up front, this is a heavy message. This is a hard one. There is good news, but this is a heavy and hard message because Peter is going to write about some things that are pretty intense this morning.

But this is what happens when you walk through books of the Bible, you get to cover all the easy fun stuff, and then all the rest of it too. So let's buckle up and do this together.

Letters of the Bible are a lot like movies. That is to say that if you jump in halfway, you're going to miss out on some significant parts of what's happening. This actually happened to me recently. I brought my family along and we joined Eddie and his daughter Manny to go see Shang-Chi, the new Marvel movie. And about halfway through the movie, Eddie being a good dad noticed that the girls' snacks were getting low and he hopped up and went to go grab some snacks. And he was only gone for two, maybe three minutes. But in that two or three minutes, a really important conversation happened between the characters in the movie. And as he walked back in, I just felt this panic rise in me. And I was like, how am I going to recap what just happened? He's not going to understand what's going on.

So in case you've missed a week or you're just joining us online, I want you to know a couple of things about Peter. So he's a man that appears in all four gospels. He was one of the original 12 disciples. He was working his day job as a fisherman and Jesus encounters him and says, drop the nets, let's go. Right, he interrupts his life. And he made him whole, he gave him purpose. He made him a new person. And I believe that Jesus wants to do that for some of you today. That's kind of his thing. Fresh starts. Transformation. I want that for all of us.

Let's take a moment to remember that Peter wasn't a fictitious character. He was a real historical person. He's as real as your grandfather. Dirty feet and dark hair and a family, and a head full of memories of Jesus' actual voice. I mean, he witnessed in person some of the craziest and most miraculous moments with Jesus. And years after Jesus dies and resurrects, Peter gets arrested for essentially breaking law and offending both the religious and the political folks in power. And his crime was the same though, it was claiming that Jesus was God or perhaps more accurately, he was agreeing with what Jesus said, which was that he was God. He ends up in a jail cell. And he knows that the government intends to kill him, that he has weeks, if not days to live. And in a damp and putrid jail cell, he gets a piece of parchment. He gets a pen. He's sitting there on death row and he starts to write. And he's writing with all of the passion and pleading he can muster because as Eddie said last week, when fire comes or when the floodwaters come to the threshold of your house, you don't waste any time. You only grab what's most important. You don't reach for stuff that doesn't matter. And so Peter is doing the exact same thing here in this letter. He knows that time is short.

Now we know that God intended for this letter to not only address the local churches that Peter loved, but also that these precious words would eventually through a process that God oversees in his sovereignty and orchestrates, that these letters would end up in our Canon, verified as the very words of God. So he's speaking to them and to us. In the opening of this letter in chapter One, Peter told them and us, that God has given us everything we need to live for his glory. Not everything we need to avoid life's problems and pain or to live comfortably, but everything we need to live for his glory-that is, his fame and renown, or as my kids like to call it, his awesomeness. Chapter One says that God is strong enough and desires to carry you through the crisis, not to avoid the crisis, but to endure it. And Peter pleads with us in Chapter One to trust the scriptures, to trust God's word. But while we are called to trust God's word, while we are called to trust our Bibles, we are not called to trust every man or woman who carries one.

If you're not a Christian and you're with us today, or if you're watching online, super thankful that you're with us. It means a lot to me. I want you to know two things this morning. I know that it bothers you when Christians who are supposed to be the most loving people, turn out to be just the opposite at times. I want you to know that bothers God too. In fact, today's passage is going to show us that God takes sin very seriously, particularly sin that drags his name through the mud. And secondly, I want you to know that one of the titles that we have for Jesus is that he is our rescuer. And today, if you hang in there, you're going to better understand what he rescues us from. And my hope would be that you'd begin to understand why we at Doxa are so crazy about Jesus.

Let's pray. Jesus, we treasure your word, even the parts that are a little harder. And I believe that you desire to speak through these verses, to help us understand your love for us, to understand your character, to understand the very way you see us. We have all bought into lies at various times about who you are and who we are, so help strip that stuff away. And I do pray that ultimately you would encourage Doxa that we would know beyond the shadow of a doubt that you are not only strong enough, but that you desire to carry us through the crisis. Help us see these things clearly and hear your voice. We pray things for your glory, Amen.

Have you ever been watching a movie or a TV show and you see something that happens early on and they're basically foreshadowing that something really bad is going to happen later. You ever seen that? I was watching a thriller recently and not really my usual genre, but I was watching a thriller. And this woman is walking up the stairs of her basement and she's carrying a large bag of clothes. And as she comes up the stairs, the hem of her dress catches a hook that's just barely sticking up on the stairs. And as she leans forward, she pulls that nail to a straight, upright position. And the camera zooms in on this nail pointing straight up and straight down and everybody watching knows, okay, that's coming back around. That's going to go bad.

Peter is about to tell us the kind of thing that gives him that same haunting feeling, that same something bad is coming back around. So let's look at verse one, chapter two, verse one, "There were indeed false prophets among the people just as there will be false teachers among you. They will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them." Just to be clear, master is a title for Jesus here. "And they will bring swift destruction on themselves." The Greek word for swift here has a lot more to do with certain than timing. That's important to remember, okay, this word swift, it means certain it's going to happen. "Many will follow their depraved ways. And the way of truth will be maligned because of them. They will exploit you in their greed and made up stories. Their condemnation pronounced long ago is not idle and their destruction does not sleep." Happy Sunday, Doxa.

Peter opens chapter two by saying that God's people have been around for a while. And just like before Christ came, what we know to be the old Testament, you had prophets, true prophets sent by God to say what was true, telling the people exactly what God intended. And you also had false prophets, spewing nonsense and misinformation. And Peter says, you're going to see the exact same thing right now in 64 AD. And again, through God's process, he says the same thing to us in 2021. You're going to have to deal with people who come around saying that they speak for me, but that they actually don't. And in fact, he's 100% sure of it. Notice that Peter is using future tense here. There will be false teachers. There will be destructive heresies. In other words, Peter is supremely confident that this threat to the church and God's people is going to continue to be an issue. You're going to hear people hold up the scripture and they're going to edit or manipulate or say something it does not say. They're going to remove the parts they don't like. They're going to add stuff that God didn't say. And they're going to spread misinformation about the gospel. They pick and choose. Why? I mean most of the time it's so they can worship the unholy trinity of money, sex, and power. And they pick and

choose as though God's word is some kind of spiritual menu through which we comb through and then, you know, ask waiter Jesus to come bring us our selection.

God does not give us that option, Church, to restrict or contain his word or his rule or his reign. And so Peter says there will be false teachers. So let's talk for a moment about what is a false teacher. And this is really the main thing I want us to drill down on today. It's important, because the idea of a false teacher or a heretic, that's something that gets thrown around a lot especially in reform circles. And a lot of times it's pointed at somebody who, if we're honest, they feel differently than we do on secondary issues. Now don't hear me say, unimportant. They're just secondary. They're not salvific or salvation.

So what kind of false teacher are we talking about here? Well, I'll tell you right now, it's a broader category than you probably think. There's really three parts to this. The first one is what probably came to mind to you when I said those words, false teacher. It's someone who spreads misinformation about core Christian doctrines. I want to clarify that a bit. I've told you before, in regards to our doctrine, we have absolutes. There are core issues, things that go in the closed hand that Jesus and his scriptures are very, very clear about- namely the father and the son and the spirit; Jesus' life, death and resurrection; the Virgin birth; participating in a local church; Jesus' return; things like that. Now your Bible has a lot of pages. That's not a very long list. The core Christian doctrines that unite the capital C church is a short list. And that's okay. If you want to dive into how we do communion or how much water to use for baptism or your church model or your pastor's wardrobe or masks or worship style, or Bible translation, things like this are secondary issues. They are not salvation issues. And while it's not problematic to have an opinion on these things-frankly I encourage that, let's be thoughtful about these things- it's highly problematic to brand someone a heretic because they feel differently than you do. And so a false teacher is one that disagrees with God, someone who refutes the closed-handed, essential issues that have been established in the church and are key to us understanding his work in the world, not somebody who disagrees with you or I on open-handed stuff. I'll also add, you don't need one of these to be a heretic (tapping pulpit). You don't need one of these to be a false teacher. Your platform could be different. It could be Instagram or Tik Tok, or your neighborhood barbecue, or a lunch conversation with a coworker. All of those provide the opportunity. So that's our first bucket.

Who else is a false teacher? Well, secondly, the Greek here can be translated to our word heresy, but it also carries with it the idea not just of a preacher gone sideways, but that false teaching also gains ground when they do what Bible scholar Doug Moo calls destructive opinions. So number two, a false teacher is one who spreads destructive opinions. Has anyone in this room felt assaulted by destructive opinions in the last year? Holy smokes...who constantly maybe brags on themselves but then rags on God's people or the local church. They're always talking about what the church did wrong, who constantly stirs up problems and divisions. Maybe are you the type to let your opinion fly even when you know it's going to hurt the people around you? These are destructive opinions. Last category, and this one might surprise you a bit. Those of us in Christ are referred to in the Bible with several different titles. We are God's kids. We are his servants. We are more than conquerors. The one that we talk a

lot about around Doxa is that we are his witnesses. And the ways that we all speak and live tell the world and each other what our hearts really believe. And Peter says it's not only those who preach misinformation from a pulpit-Peter's writing tells us that a false teacher is someone who lives life in such a way that is incompatible with the gospel. Someone who claims Christ and lives opposed to him, that they too are guilty of spreading misinformation.

So when I lose my patience with my kids, I am showing and telling something false. Peter's net just got wider again. So why would he include those living against the gospel while claiming team Jesus? Well, in part it's, because we're made in God's image and God commands us to show the world, to tell the world who he is. It's the ultimate show and tell. But when we lie, we stop doing that. In fact, we are never less light God than when we lie, because he does not lie. At no point has Jesus ever said something untrue. So when we claim to love Jesus, but living incompatibly with the gospel, we tell the world that Christ is something less than he is. Peter says that we are false teachers. You know, this passage should certainly cause some healthy fear and trembling for every preacher, but he is not just writing to the Charles Spurgeons or the Billy Grahams or even the Eddie Williams and Donald Zimmermans in the world. He's talking to all of us. And unless you can say that you've never shared a destructive opinion or lived your life in such a way that maybe in moments said that something other than Jesus was most important to you, then you and I are on the hook this morning.

Verse three closes with this haunting phrase. It says, "their destruction does not sleep." Peter says that not only will the misinformation harm those who listen, but that their lives will eventually come back, come back around. It's just like the nail on the basement stairs. You know something really bad has been set in motion. Now in these next verses, Peter is going to kind of show the receipts of how God interacts very differently with those that choose him as opposed to those that use him or refuse him. And in response to all the misinformation that's being spread, Peter says, let's check the receipts and see how God actually operates. Okay. In verse four, "For if God didn't spare the angels who sinned, but cast them into hell and delivered them in chains of utter darkness to be kept for judgment. And if he didn't spare the ancient world, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness and seven others, when he brought the flood on the world of the ungodly, and if he reduced the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes and condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is coming to the ungodly"... quick side note here a lot more going on in Sodom and Gomorrah than what you were probably taught growing up in the church. It wasn't just the sins you first think of when you hear Sodom and Gomorrah. Go read Ezekiel 16, they had a real problem with the poor there. Verse seven, "if he rescued righteous Lot," Lot wasn't exactly on the spiritual all-star team. If you know anything about his life, it's fascinating that this passage would use the word righteous and Lot in the same sentence. He did some pretty gnarly stuff. It says that he was distressed by the depraved behavior of the immoral. "For as that righteous man lived among them day by day his righteous soul was tormented by the lawless deeds he saw and heard. Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment." I want to read that verse nine again. "Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials."

He ends in verse 10, especially those who follow the polluting desires of the flesh and despise authority. So in our era of misinformation, Church, fact-checking is more important than ever. Having the evidence of what you're saying is a really, really big deal. And Peter in this passage is going after really two kinds of doubters, both of whom are in the room right now I promise you. I guarantee you that both of these people are here in this room. One, those who say that God will not in the end judge all of mankind. He is too soft or too far off or too distracted or some reduced version of love will prevent him from doing that. Group Two are those who are overwhelmed and do not believe that God is going to get them through the trial that they are under right now.

And Peter here is providing multiple examples of God's unrelenting and unwavering commitment to show grace to the repentant and show judgment to those who use him or refuse him. He has always done that. It is part and parcel with who he is. He actually defines what love and justice are. They are inseparable in him. And Peter says, check the receipts, check the pattern. When sinful unworthy people like you and I refuse God and the escape route he provides, we can trust that God will bring judgment. And Peter says, check the receipts, check the pattern. When sinful unworthy people like you and I receive God's invitation of grace and mercy, choosing to follow him, we can trust that he will carry you through the crisis. He will carry you through the crisis. Church, you can fact check God all you want to. He is able and he will carry you through the crisis you are in right now.

In verses 10 through 16, it's kind of like Peter is filing a police report. He's just giving us a description of our suspect, the false teacher, so that we know how to recognize him when we see him. He says, "Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones." Uh, there's a whole sermon in that verse. May surprise you, this is a fascinating concept. He's basically saying these false teachers either provoke or ignore the demonic realm isn't that interesting. They provoke or ignore the demonic realm. And we'll talk about that in just a moment. "Whereas angels, though greater in might and power do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. 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, 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, they have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!"

Peter says that false teachers are bold. They are willful. They are stubborn. He uses this phrase, "blaspheme the glorious ones." It's his way of saying again that they don't pay attention to or provoke demonic powers. Now this, really quickly. We, as Christians are not called to live in fear of a demonic realm. But I want to be really, really clear apart from Christ, we would have great reason to fear. We have no power or defense against the demonic realm apart from Christ. In fact, they are far more powerful than we are, and that's precisely why Jesus is our rescue. And so to pretend as though there is nothing demonic ever happening in the world is a mistake, as it is for the believer to live in fear or anxiety about the demonic realm. But those are both errors.

In Christ we no longer fear the demonic realm, but those who ignore or taunt or disregard the demonic realm, the Bible calls fools.

So Peter says that false teachers are irrational. They act like animals. They live out of their instinct instead of wisdom. They're bold in their sexual sin. They prey upon the insecure and unsteady. They're unrepentant. This is a big one. I don't care what size the platform is, how big the online following is, how many book deals they have, if a Bible teacher is unrepentant, he is a false teacher. And God's people are never called to follow or support in any way a leader in the church who refuses to repent. Peter says that they despise authority. If you know of a Bible teacher that despises authority, he refuses to listen to those around him, or if you know of somebody who is under biblical church discipline and ran away, that's not a church you want to be a part of. I promise you. If you know of a church with a leader at the top that has all the power and answers to no one, has no authority over them at all, that is a ticking time bomb. And here's the kicker. Peter says that these kinds of false teachers do it all while posing as Christians, so much so that they're likely to be found at the same dinner table, eating meals with those who are indeed born again and belong to God. The Bible has another name for this person. It's a Wolf.

Let's look at verse 17. It says, "these people are Springs without water, mists driven by a storm. The gloom of darkness has been reserved for them. For by uttering, boastful, empty words they seduce with fleshly desires and debauchery people who have barely escaped from those who live in error. They promised them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. Since people are enslaved to whatever defeats them." Peter says that false teaching is like a spring. It's supposed to be life-giving. But for the false teacher, it actually turns out to not have any water. False teachers promise freedom, but they instead put you on house arrest. And this is important for us to hear, Church, because in general and the older you are, and the longer you walk with Jesus Christ, the more, you know, this is true, false teaching always makes a promise and always fails to deliver. I'm going to say it again for people in the back. False teaching always makes a promise and always fails to deliver. A false gospel that tells you God wants you to only be healthy-it falls apart really fast when doctor's office calls with those test results. The loudest false gospel I know of right now in this moment in our culture is the one that tells you that the solution to all of your problems is for you just to be the real you. And that falls apart really fast when you get down inside there and find out that there's some stuff that's kind of dark. The irony of that is that God actually does want you to be your true self. That is only made possible when Christ rips out all of the brokenness in you that you've been carrying around. He wants you to be the real you.

It's just one of the many ways that Satan copies and counterfeits and hijacks something of God's and tries to pull out Jesus from the equation so that you ultimately long for a kingdom, but no King. A false gospel that tells you that God cares more about your happiness than your joy and your holiness-that falls apart really fast when your company lays you off or a friend betrays you, or you lose a loved one. I mean, let's be real. If we called the disciples up on stage and interviewed them, if the disciples, if we believe they were the dead center of God's will the ones that were hung upside down and pelted with rocks until they died, do you think any of

them are going to say today that Jesus' primary message was that he wants us to be comfortable and live a life of pain-free prosperity? Can we understand how crazy that sounds? Do you think the disciples would think that sounds silly at best? And honestly, maybe a little offensive. False teaching always makes a promise and always fails to deliver. So let's close with these last few verses. Verse 20, "For if having escaped the world's impurity through the knowledge of the Lord and savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in these things and defeated, the last state is worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy command delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb. A dog returns to his own vomit and a washed sow returns to wallowing in the mud." All right, plenty to unpack. Again, there's a whole sermon in here for sure.

But just for time sake, let's focus on the obvious question here. Is Peter saying you can lose your salvation? Is that what he's saying? Let's talk about hermeneutics a bit. Hermeneutics is essentially the study of the scriptures, the mechanics of how we study the scriptures. And just like if you're a crime scene investigator the evidence that is crystal clear, informs and shapes how you interpret any evidence that is not clear, okay? So if we didn't have other verses to help interpret it, this is a troubling couple of verses. And I will be in front of the line to say that. If it wasn't for John 10 and Romans 8 and Philippians 1, well, we do have those verses. And so we can be confident that Peter is not suggesting that these false teachers are losing their salvation, but that rather they profess something out loud that was not true of their hearts. They professed something that they didn't believe. And the proof is that they go back and roll in the mud of their old way of life. And I got to say, as a pastor here, my shepherd side reads this passage and thinks, gosh, I would never want any believer, any child of God in Doxa church in this room to feel anxiety or nervousness or anxiousness about their own salvation, simply because they have continued to fight the fight and struggle with sin. That's not who he's talking to. That's not who he's talking to.

But on the flip side, I also, as a pastor would not want anyone who is not born again and has not placed their faith in Christ to continue to believe the lie that they are safe, that they are okay, that as this passage says, whatever enslaves you, that's your master. So I just want to be really clear. These verses are not addressing the Christian in this room who struggles with sin. This is not for the believer who continues to feel the presence of sin, even though the power and the penalty have been destroyed and paid for in full. Because a Christian is a new creation. A pig is still a pig if you give it a bath, right? But a Christian, according to Galatians Two is a new creation. And when somebody runs back to their old life, unrepentant, they show what kind of creature they actually are.

One last thought on this, we cannot see others' futures. I have seen lifelong believers walk away and roll in the mud. And I've seen folks that you would never think in a million years come around, slam right into God's spirit and get saved and become a completely different person. We do not know. We do not know. That's why we watch the fruit of those who claim the name of Christ. And we pray for the miraculous grace of God to break through to those who have run far off. Only God knows where they land in the end. I know we have parents in this room who

have older kids that have strayed from the Lord, and we pray for you. We pray for those kids to come back and I want you to know right now it is not too late. It is not too late for them.

So let's close with this. Who is the false teacher? Well, it seems like some days it's most of us. I mean, if you've shared an unkind opinion about somebody who wronged you, haven't we demonized others who feel passionately about things differently than us. Haven't we done things incompatible with the gospel. And then if we played the footage back on one of these screens, we would just feel terror and shame. Yes, you and I have done these things, which is precisely why the gospel of Jesus Christ never weakens or loses its shine. This is why the bottomless and far reaching grace of God is beyond our full ability to grasp. This is why every Saint in this room who has followed Jesus for four or five decades even, can with more passion, not less, with more excitement and more passion say, yes, I belong on that cross.

I have fallen short. I have given into weakness. I have told lies about God with my words and my actions. And it is only because of Jesus Christ that I stand before God blameless. It is only because I can tuck in behind Jesus, the one that is righteous and that he receives the well-deserved wrath, that the wrath of God lands on him, squarely on his chest and not one ounce of it gets past him. Nothing spills out, but instead, all of it is absorbed by Jesus Christ. The only one who didn't deserve any of it. So what's the difference between the false teachers who live in a way incompatible with the gospel and you and I. It's very simple—repentance. Repentance. Christ alone is our only hope. And he gladly takes our mistakes and our rebellion and he calls us saints. Christ covers the sin that we had in us the day we were born. And he pays the balance in full that we have run up on our spiritual tabs. The difference between you and I and the false teacher is repentance. And the same savior that is powerful enough to save you is able to carry you through the crisis you're in right now. He is able. And he's not just strong enough, he wants to. He has not forgotten you. Let's pray.

Jesus, I know we have some folks in our church that this morning are carrying very heavy weights. They're going through some hard things. Forgive us for ever thinking you promised us that we would not have to face these things. But we need you to bring your peace into our hearts, into our homes, into our families, into our marriages, into the lives of our kids. We need you. So we cry out to you now in our hearts that you would help, that you would save, that you would turn things around, that you would sustain us. Jesus, for those in the room that are walking in a, just a season of abundance and really enjoying the ways in which you are unfolding life right now, I pray that they would take that abundance and share encouragement and time and tears with those that are weighed down. Please help the church be the church. Help us encourage one another. Help us hear your voice clearly. We need you to continue to carry us through. We know that you are strong enough, that you desire it. And the truth is, if we look over our shoulders, we can see the evidence. We can check the receipts and see a thousand times that you have done exactly what we needed, that you have come through, even when things are hard. So help our unbelief. We pray these things for your glory, Amen.

