



## 2 Peter 2:1-22 They Will Attack You Here

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro  
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As Americans we have enemies. There are people in this world who want to do us harm, physical or even financial harm. As a result, especially in this city, we spend a lot of time and effort trying to determine our enemies' intentions and our own vulnerabilities. We have been fielding an army of agents, analysts, interceptors, sensors, and surveillance platforms since long before the Global War on Terror began, all in an effort to know: what is going on? We want to know who is planning to do what, when, where and how, so we can stop them.

As Christians we have enemies as well, we are surrounded by threats to our spiritual well being. Fortunately though, we don't need an army of spooks, squints, and speakers to identify the threats because God has already done that through His Word.

Peter points out one very specific danger that we need to watch out for. He says there always have been, there are, and there always will be people out there who will come into your life and try to tell you, "You can have it all." "You can be religious, and you can do it without really making any changes in your life. You can be a spiritual person and still do whatever you want." Peter says those people are wrong, they are deceived and they face judgment from God.

This morning, we're going to go through Chapter Two and get a big picture look at what he is saying and then we'll come back and make some observations about how we should respond.

As we step into this, remember that Peter has spent all of Chapter One reminding us of what we have in Christ and how we should respond to that, and he has said that he wanted to remind us of it, even though we already know it, because it was that important. After all, he said, he wasn't just propagating some fairy tale, these things he was talking about *actually happened* and they were in line with what God's prophets had been saying throughout history.

**1** But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. **2** And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. **3** By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

So here Peter spells it all out. Back in the days of the true prophets, there were also false prophets. We mentioned that last week, that if you read through the Old Testament, you will see men who were appointed by God were speaking the truth of God and yet other men

were saying the exact opposite. And people usually wanted to hear those guys instead of the guys who were actually delivering God's message.

Well, Peter says, that issue isn't going away. He says there would be false teachers among the new Christians as well. And that "many" would follow their destructive ways.

Now that word in verse two ought to get your attention. Many. Not a few, not some, not just here and there. No, he says, "many." And because of this, "the way of truth" - which is what Christianity was originally called, or simply, "The Way," the name Christianity was given later and took a little while to stick - anyway, he's saying that Christianity would be blasphemed because of it all.

And that makes sense when you understand what these false teachers are teaching. He says, "By covetousness they will exploit you." That's the attack that comes at dawn. That's the plan. That's the threat. That's what you need to be on the lookout for. Covetousness. It's a word we don't use much today, but it's on God's Top Ten list - the Ten Commandments, "you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his house, or his ox." So, if your neighbor has an ox, don't covet it!

What is coveting? It's a compulsive, greedy desire to have more. It's looking at something and believing that if you just had it, you'd be satisfied. Truthfully, it's one of the engines of our modern expression of capitalism. As long as you keep wanting more and spending money to get it, the economy keeps moving.

And now perhaps you see why this causes Christianity to be blasphemed.

Peter has been saying that (Vs 3), God "has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us" and that (vs 4) we have also been given "exceedingly great and precious promises" now, NOTE THIS, "**that through these** you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world **through lust.**"

Peter is trying to tell us that God has given us everything we need, so why do we feel such a strong compulsion to go lusting, to go coveting, after more? We can be, and we ought to be, content in simply knowing this great and wonderful God who has done so much for us. But we aren't, at least not all of us, and not all of the time.

So, on the one hand we say how great it is to be saved by grace and we talk about the wonders that God has in store for those who love Him, and we sing of how Jesus is all we need, and then we go out and do stupid things in the name of satisfying a desire of our hearts or of our flesh.

And the world sees it all and says, well, if all the Christians I know are so satisfied in Jesus, if Jesus is so great, why are they out doing drugs? Why are they getting drunk at the club or the party? Why are they having an affair? Why are they cheating to get ahead? Why are they doing all the things I'm doing if they say they have what I need?

And so, we get labeled hypocrites, and “the way of truth [is] blasphemed” because sometimes we give in to desires that ought to be satisfied in Christ alone.

Those who say this kind of thing is OK, those who say you can still love Jesus and do whatever you want, whatever you think it takes to have a good time, or satisfy your desires, or make a good life – you can do all of that and be a Christian, are false teachers and they will be judged.

[4](#) For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; [5](#) and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; [6](#) and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; [7](#) and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked [8](#) (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)— [9](#) *then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, [10](#) and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. *They are* presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, [11](#) whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.

Now, we’ll come back to some of these descriptions in a minute, but first I want to finish outlining the shape of Peter’s argument.

In these verses Peter is saying that God knows how to judge those who need to be judged, and how to save those who need to be saved. He judged the angels when they fell – the Bible says that 1/3 of the angels joined in the rebellion with Lucifer, some of them were immediately cast into hell, and others roam the earth today as demons. So, God can judge supernatural beings.

He can also judge the whole earth. He already did once, when He destroyed the entire population, except Noah and his family, with the great flood.

And finally, God has judged cities, like the judgment He brought down on Sodom and Gomorrah.

But He also knows how to spare those, like Noah and Lot, who love Him. *No matter how flawed they are.* And that last part is important – no matter how flawed they are. God is not in the business of saving perfect people; He’s in the business of saving sinners, wretched, depraved, selfish, coveting, lusting, sinners. He doesn’t mind finding them that way, but He won’t leave them that way. He will offer you forgiveness for what you have done wrong, but He will also show you what must be done right, and then He’ll help you to do it, but that has to be your desire.

And that's the problem. It's not the desire of these false teachers, they don't want to be conformed to God's commands - they want to do their own thing.

[12](#) But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, [13](#) and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. *They are* spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, [14](#) having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. [15](#) They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; [16](#) but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

Balaam was a man who was hired by Israel's enemies to curse the nation. When he was offered the job God told him not to go, but he kept asking and finally went trying all along to see if there was a way he could get paid and still be obedient to God. He was trying to figure out a way to have the best of both worlds. Ever done that? And on the way, God actually used his donkey to warn him. You can read more about it in Numbers 22.

[17](#) These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. [18](#) For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.

So again, this threat is aimed specifically at you, the church, at those who have escaped from the error of this world. The way you're going to be attacked is by appeals to the lusts of your flesh – by opportunities to indulge, to give in, to let go of self-control. That can be sensual and it can also be emotional – giving in to feelings – feelings of romantic love, feelings of depression, feelings of anger – anything which you desire but which you know is wrong, you will always be tempted to “just go for it.” And there will always be those around you who will encourage you to go for it, but:

[19](#) While they [false teachers] promise them [you] liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

These false teachers talk about things they don't understand because they permit the impossible out of a desire to wed the Truth with their desires. They say you can have it all, that everything is permissible, especially under *your* circumstances, but they've actually become slaves of their own desires. They look down on you for being a slave to Christ and not living like they do, but they are slaves themselves.

So Peter delivers one final judgment on them:

[20](#) For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. [21](#) For it would have been better for them not to have

known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. [22](#) But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: “*A dog returns to his own vomit,*” and, “*a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.*”

Why would it have been better for them not to know the truth about Who God is, what He has done, and what He demands? Because, now they are less likely to be able to hear the truth of the gospel. People who have been exposed to Christianity growing up and turned their backs are some of the hardest to talk to because they think they know, they think they understand. But they don't really understand because they have all their own ideas about what things mean, and they have all their own opinions and biases.

But also, it would have been better for them not to know, because now they suffer a greater judgment – they can't claim ignorance. And that greater knowledge makes them more accountable.

So that's Peter's argument – watch out for these guys, because they know the same truth as you do, but they think they can still fulfill all their selfish desires, all their lusts, that they can pursue whatever they covet or desire and still be good with God. And of course, that is wrong, because they should be finding their satisfaction in Christ alone.

But these teachers, and we at times, are not satisfied in Christ alone so they go chasing after other things and because of that, they will be judged. They are proving that they probably were never saved in the first place – they came around, they had a good time, enjoyed the religious “feel” of it all, but they wanted to have it both ways and God says “absolutely not.”

So how do we respond to this threat? What do we do? Two things. Just like with a threat to our country, we need awareness and action.

Awareness: We need to be aware of the threat. Peter says that these false teachers “**will**” be among you – it's a fact, not a possibility. So watch out for them. What do they look like? Do we have any posters we can hang up? Any artist's renditions or sketches? No. And I'm not going to name any names this morning.

But we need to realize that we receive teaching from many sources. There are the formal teachers we would expect like pastors and professors, but there are also a whole lot of informal teachers that instruct us each day – our friends, our family, books we read, movies we watch, talk shows or podcasts we listen to – all of these things influence us and share their ideas with us changing us little by little.

Do any of you remember the quote from Vice President Biden when he and President Obama were coming out in support of gay marriage? What did he say? Referring to the TV show *Will & Grace*, about a gay lawyer in New York which ran on NBC in primetime for eight seasons, Biden noted:

“Will and Grace’ probably did more to educate the American public than almost anything anybody’s ever done so far.”

Now, the point here is not to drift into the homosexuality debate, but simply to point out that even the Vice President of the United States recognizes that you are being taught, slowly, and subtly, and therefore your ideas, your values, and your convictions are being moved and changed *by the TV shows you watch!* So ask yourself: what are the messages that I am consuming, and what affect are they having on me? Are they moving me closer to God’s ideals, or farther away?

We also need to be aware that they bring in these messages, secretly according to verse 1. They’re not always easy to spot. People don’t usually stand up and say, I’d like to share something with you that is harmful, damaging, and false.

So how do we recognize their lies?

They have two characteristics: they offer you selfish gain, the chance to do something that you feel convicted about, or to get something you hesitate over, and because they are telling you to go ahead and do what you want to do, they also (vs 10) despise authority. Well, that’s natural, right? After all, they’re rebelling against the rules that God has made – and that rebellion just trickles down.

But it’s not enough to just have awareness. We also need to take action. And the action is to know more about God and His truth. Remember, that is why Peter is writing this in the first place – so we would remember the basics of the faith *and live by them*. He’s been saying it all along, and he’s going to keep saying it through chapter Three as he closes this short letter.

Turn a page with me and look at the closing verses:

[17](#) You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; [18](#) but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.

As you grow in the truth, you will be more able to spot a lie. You’ll be more able to readily spot an attack coming. So, instead of spending time pursuing the things you covet, instead of spending time thinking and daydreaming about how you’re going to get ahead, or what it would be like if your desires were fulfilled – think instead on Christ. Rejoice in what God has done for you. Give thanks and worship for what you have instead of wanting for what you don’t.

When you see the threat coming, or realize an attack is underway, run toward the One who will defend you and warn - soberly, not alarmingly - those around you about the threats you have seen. For “many” are at risk here. The threat is real, but it has been exposed. You

know how the attack will come. Now you just have to be on the lookout for it and stand against it.

Let's ask God for help in doing that right now.

Help us to see the things we covet –to identify the desires that lead us away from you

Help us to identify the false teachers in our lives –the voices that are encouraging us to do what we know we ought not do, and help us know how to shut them out or resist their influence.

Help us to know the truth and to walk in it

Most of all, help us to realize all that you have given us in Christ and to be content, truly, unmoveably content in Him