

Ministry of Grace Church

2 Peter 2:1-4 - Speaker Notes



Background

This entire chapter of 2nd Peter is devoted to the condemnation of false teachers in the church. Just as there were false prophets in the Old Testament, there are false teachers throughout the church age. They bring destructive heresies into the church, even to the point of denying the lordship of Jesus Christ. In doing so, they will lead many people astray, but Peter assures us that they will not go unpunished.

The objective of the teachings of these false teachers is to attract people, not to offer them salvation, but to garner from them their hard earned money so that these teachers can satisfy their own desires. They draw people into their churches, not with messages of repentance and submission to God, but with messages that convince people that their sinful behaviors are normal and acceptable. Their powerful, persuasive sermons are great, well-crafted word-symphonies designed to excite the minds and souls of men, and they appear to have a lot to offer. The people drawn in by these false teachers are often just coming out of churches where they felt trapped. Instead of finding freedom, however, they become further enslaved to their own physical desires.

Peter compares the preaching of these false teachers to wells without water and clouds that give no rain. Promising freedom, they convince their followers that they can obtain salvation through knowing the way of righteousness. But this knowledge is not the experiential knowledge of submission to the Savior; instead, it is mere head knowledge about Jesus and the way of righteousness. The tragedy is that by telling people what they want to hear, these false teachers are leading the people away from God, right back to the filth they had been wallowing in formerly, which Peter likens to the behavior of pigs returning to the mud.

Peter describes false teachers in detail in this chapter so that Christians are able to recognize their characteristics and methods. The greatest sin of Christ-rejecters and the most damning work of Satan is misrepresentation of the truth and its consequential deception. Nothing is more wicked than for someone to claim to speak for God resulting in the salvation of souls when, in reality, he speaks for Satan resulting in the damnation of souls. False teachers

parade themselves as Christian pastors, teachers, and evangelists, but their heresies are self-designed religious lies which lead to division and faction.

All of the writings from which the New Testament was translated were written during the first century AD. Unfortunately, none of the original versions of these writings are still around. What we have are copies, or portions of copies, of copies, of copies, etc. As a result of this copying and re-copying, over a period of time words sometimes got changed, added, or deleted by the copiers. These variations in the text are referred to as “variant readings.” **2 Peter 2:2** is one example of this. The most reliable of these copies uses the word *aselgeia*, here translated “sensuality.” This Greek word refers to “debauchery, sexual excess, absence of restraint, or insatiable desire for pleasure.” Other copies of this letter instead use the word *apōleia*, which refers to “the state after death where one realizes that he or she is lost and has no hope of salvation.” Translations that use this textual source often translate this word as “destructive ways.”

Even though we have disagreement regarding the precise word Peter used, as with virtually all textual disagreements in the New Testament, the difference between “destructive ways” and “sensuality” does not affect our doctrinal view. But it does slightly alter what Peter is saying about these false teachers. Whether we refer to the heretical teaching of these false teachers as “leading people into an eternal state where salvation is no longer possible” or “leading people into a false religion which has no restraint from pleasures,” it’s evidence of a man-made religious substitute for true Christianity.

It’s amazing to me how often “popular” churches are preaching a watered-down gospel or misleading heresies. People seem to flock to them, probably because these churches are non-threatening to their sinful way of life, and comfortable. In some cases, it’s because the church actually caters to their particular sinful practices without condemning them or proclaiming the truth about them.

And it’s difficult to convince someone involved with one of these churches that they are being led astray because they don’t want to see the truth. The fact of the matter is, however, that many unsaved people on the outside can see through the façade and know that something’s wrong with their religion. This type of religion in the name of Christianity has caused many others to turn away from God and even to categorically claim that all Christians are this way, which is precisely what Peter said would happen.

Let’s listen to how Peter introduces the subject of false teachers.

2 Peter 2:1-2

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned.

In the previous chapter, Peter proclaimed the importance of, and veracity of, the prophetic messages in scriptures. Now he gives us a warning that we need to heed, especially today! He tells us that in addition to the absolutely truthful and reliable prophets of the Old Testament, there were also those who were masquerading as prophets of God who, in fact,

were not. Peter says that there will also be false teachers among us, who will not just deny the truth of the Word, but they will teach destructive heresies.

The Greek word for destructive basically means damnation. This word is used six times in this letter and always speaks of final damnation. This is why it is so tragic when a church makes a virtue out of the toleration of unscriptural teachings and ideas in the name of love and unity

The word “heresies” is translated from the Greek word, *haireisis*. The verb form of which means “to choose for oneself.” Thus, a heresy is not a God given truth, but a false truth chosen by the false teacher.

In other words, Peter tells us that the false teachers of today are proclaiming a message that they choose for themselves rather than proclaiming the truth that God intended. And these lies (or mis-truths, or even half-truths) will cause absolute destruction, not only to those who believe their lies but to those proclaiming the lies as well. These false teachers will even go so far as to deny their master; literally the text says “disavow the master who bought them,” ultimately bringing destruction on themselves.

There are two things we can learn from this. First, we should not be teaching God’s Word unless we are sure it is the Spirit of God who is teaching through us. We who teach are under harsher condemnation if we do not adhere strictly to the truth. James warns us:

Do not, many of you, become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)

In other words, be careful, those of you who want to teach, because you will receive a greater punishment for false teaching and for leading others astray.

The other thing we all can learn from this part of Peter’s message is that we need to be careful who we believe. Don’t believe any teacher of the Bible simply because he or she claims to teach the truth. Rather, we need to make sure that they are teaching God’s Word and not their own interpretation of religion. The Apostle John said:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

The best Biblical example of this is the believers in the church at Berea:

And the brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, *examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.* (Acts 17:10-11)

2 Peter 2:3-4

And in their greed they will exploit you with false words, their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels who sinned, but cast them into the pit and delivered them to chains of darkness, being kept for judgment;

The expression, “false words” comes from the Greek words *plastois logois*. We have seen the word *logos* before, meaning “a word or a message.” The other word here is *plastos*,

from which we get our English word “plastic.” This Greek word means “molded” or “purposely shaped.” Today we refer to this kind of language as “spin.”

Peter has been talking about false prophets of the past and false teachers of the present. He now tells us what is driving their actions and how they operate. His imagery is that of a snake oil salesman traveling about, taking advantage of uneducated people by way of well chosen but intentionally misleading words so as to make the message sound like what the people want. They do this simply for the purpose of taking their money. These false teachers that Peter is talking about are presenting messages that will inspire and comfort people so that they will give to the ministry to meet the selfish desires of the false teachers.

Their deception is as old as sin itself, driven by the same selfishness that drove Satan to deceive Eve with molded words that may have sounded good but that lead to destruction. Peter tells us (literal translation of [2 Peter 2:3](#)):

their long standing judgment is definitely not idle and their destruction is definitely not dozing-off

In other words, the same judgment that has been given concerning this type of deception from of old will be applied to these false teachers of today without fail. They may think that they are getting away with something, but their destruction is sure.

These false teachers are occupying many of our church pulpits today, delivering sermons and homilies that bless the hearts of the hearers, while leading them straight to Hell. Their messages are soothing and even inspiring, but they are not the messages that God wants delivered. These messages are intended to please the people rather than to proclaim the message of sacrifice, commitment, and submission. These false teachers are delivering messages that church members are willing to pay for! How sad.

Peter starts off verse 4 with, “[For if God did not ...](#)” The word “if” indicates a conditional clause. In New Testament Greek there are three classes of conditional clauses. This one is a first-class condition. This type of Greek conditional sentence assumes that the protasis (premise) is true for the sake of argument. For this reason, some have proposed that the “if” can be translated as “since.” Whereas this is not always true, in this case it does give us a better sense of what the Greek is saying.

[For if God did not spare angels who sinned, but cast them into the pit ...](#)

Instead of “[cast them into the pit](#),” some translations say, “[Sent them to hell](#).” The word translated [pit](#) or [hell](#) is based on the noun *Tartaros*, the name of “the subterranean abyss of Greek mythology where the gods were punished.” This word is sometimes translated as “Pit of the abyss” or “the bottomless pit.”

Peter is absolutely certain that the judgment, and destruction, of these false teachers and their destruction will come. He tells us this because, like today, these false teachers are prospering in spite of their selfish tactics. He now goes on to give us several examples of judgments that have already been pronounced upon those who thought they were getting away with their rebellion. The first of these examples is the angels that sinned.

We don’t know exactly what their sin was, although [Jude 6](#) implies that these angels left their original dwelling place and went somewhere they were not supposed to go. Some

believe that this is a reference to the angels having come down to earth to cohabitate with human women, but that is really only speculation. What we do know is that they exceeded the bounds that God had set for them, and they were punished.

Peter tells us that the angels are incarcerated in Tartarus in chains of darkness awaiting their judgment. And, by combining this verse with the end of this sentence (in verse nine), we see that Peter is saying, “If God did not spare angels when they sinned ... then the Lord knows how to ... keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,” His point is that judgment will certainly come to these spirit beings just as judgment will come to the false teachers who are selling snake oil to the people.

So What?

Are you attending church regularly? If not, why not? We all need to hear the truth of God’s word on a regular basis, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. Fellowship with other believers is almost as important as learning the truth of the Bible. We don’t get that fellowship if we are just listening to messages on the internet.

Next - are you searching the Scriptures to see if the things taught from the pulpit or from websites are truth? Are you searching the Scriptures to see if the things taught in these weekly sermons from Ministry of Grace Church are truth? I sure hope so!

If you are a born-again Christian, are you proclaiming the truth about your faith? One thing that I want all of us to see here is that, in a sense, we are all proclaimers of our beliefs in the way that we live our lives and behave in front of others. Are you proclaiming a message that is consistent with the truth of the Word? Or - are you proclaiming a false religion that merely professes Christianity without demonstrating it?

There are a number of different types of false teachings which have already crept into the church. One of the most prevalent heresies in the church today is the Health and Wellness Gospel (also called the Prosperity Gospel or the Word of Faith gospel) which is based on a very loose interpretation of **Proverbs 12:21** and **Proverbs 10:22**). Many of the false teachings today are filled with New-Age and New-Thought hereseys (from people like Joyce Meyer, Joel Osteen, Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hin, Stephen Furtic, TD Jakes, and a number of others). Some of these hereseys include:

Oneness – Jesus claimed that He and the Father are One and we are the children of God just as Jesus is. Therefore we are one with God, thus making us gods as well.

The Law of Attraction - Your thoughts and your beliefs manifest your reality based on how much faith and love you have. They are the source of your power to affect the world around you. The core of this teaching is that you are a god. You will get whatever you ask for through your thoughts and feelings based on the amount of your faith. This is loosely based on a misunderstanding of Jesus’s teaching.

Syncretism - Syncretism involves the merging or assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion. Syncretism asserts an underlying unity of all faiths, allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths. It is especially apparent today in the mixing of Christian beliefs with the cultural beliefs around us. It also shows itself in the rejecting of certain Biblical teachings based

on the belief that they don't apply to us because they were written for a different culture than what we live in.

Universalism – Our god is a god of love and even if some are not fit for heaven (yet) they will be allowed in after a period of time. This is the source of the Catholic belief in purgatory.

Mysticism – pursuing some kind of personal spiritual experience or discovering some kind of hidden meaning producing a special spiritual connection with God.

Another type of false teaching is the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), which takes the Prosperity Gospel and “kicks it up a notch.” This false teaching includes such outlandish manifestations as holy laughter, trembling, raising the dead, trips to heaven, and being drunk in the Holy Spirit. Bethel Church is the most notable church teaching the New Apostolic Reformation heresy.

These heresies may sound like a “fun” way to experience your Christian faith. However, at their root, these all cater to our flesh, our sin nature. They all promise the fulfillment of our hopes and dreams through a sensual and materialistic realm that is supposedly what God wants for us.

So, how can we tell messages that proclaim the truth from those that contain deceptive heresies? Well, ask a bank teller how they can tell counterfeit money from the real thing. They don't study every single type of counterfeit. Instead, they study the real thing in excruciating detail. They know it so well that anything different looks like a fake. That's exactly how we train ourselves to detect Biblical heresy. We read the Bible. We study the Bible. We read the Bible. We study the Bible. We listen to messages from people who we know to be teachers of the truth. We read the Bible. We study the Bible. We read sermons from people who we know to be teachers of the truth. We read the Bible. Well, I think you get the message. The only way to detect heretical teaching is to know the Bible so well that any non-Biblical teaching sounds fake.

The bottom line is that there are lots of churches teaching untruths and partial truths. Meanwhile, there are still churches today preaching an unadulterated gospel message of repentance for our sins and humble submission to the will of God. These are typically smaller churches because these are practices which go counter to the world system and people want the freedom to do as they want. People don't flock to churches that are teaching the truth because such teaching makes them feel uncomfortable. Besides, they don't want to submit to God. In fact, they don't want to submit to anyone.

So, what can we do about it. The next time you hear your pastor preach a message that is straight from The Word, one that pricks your heart, causing you to once again submit yourself to the God of all creation, tell your pastor thank you for taking the road less traveled and being God's instrument of righteousness.

But - perhaps you go to church on Sunday to be soothed and comforted. If so, be careful because you may very well be buying snake oil!

Let's pray.