

## False Teachers and the Church, pt. I (2 Pet 2.1-10a)

### I. DELIGHTING IN GOD'S WORD: STANDING WITH THE LORD IN TRUTH

<sup>16</sup>In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. <sup>15</sup>I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. <sup>16</sup>I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word. (Ps 119.14-16)

- A. One of the most essential needs in the body of Christ in our contemporary moment is to become a people who *delight in God's truth*. To delight in the truth of God (his word, his law, his precepts) does not only mean that we enjoy his word in our personal lives or in the place of study — but that we learn to love what he loves and grow in our ability to stand in agreement with his will.
- B. To stand with God in truth (to delight in his word) is costly and unpopular. In our day there is an increasing stigma for holding to the precepts and the truths of God's word unapologetically. Standing with Jesus on the truth of his word will cause us to experience great reproach, mocking, alienation, and potentially persecution.

<sup>9</sup>Zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me (Ps 69.9)

- C. Like in Peter's Day, we live in a moment where false teaching is increasing *within* the church. There is a spirit of confusion and of uncertainty that marks many believers today because of the presence of false teaching.
- D. The primary strategy that Peter uses to combat false teaching is the intentional and faithful *strengthening of the church*. Peter does not spend time speaking out against the outside culture or even talking about the false doctrines themselves. Rather, he gives his efforts toward reminding the church of the truth, shining a light on the characteristics of the false teaching, and warning of the devastating results of turning away from truth.
- E. 2 Peter 2 is one of the most terrifying chapters in the whole of Scripture. In it Peter illustrates that one of the greatest dangers facing the church of Jesus Christ is not the darkness of the world outside, but rather false teaching as it creeps its way through the church from within.

#### F. Outline of 2 Peter 2

2:1-3	The presence of false teachers
2:4-10a	The certainty of judgment and deliverance
2:11-19	The characteristics of false teachers and their teaching
2:20-22	The sobering judgment of those who follow deception

### II. THE PRESENCE OF FALSE TEACHERS (2 PET 2.1-3)

- A. At the end of the previous section, Peter had emphasized that his readers ought to give themselves to knowing and understanding the prophetic testimony of the Scripture. He exhorts them to this because he understands that the prophetic Scriptures are given of God by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of illuminating our sight in the midst of the darkness of this world.

<sup>19</sup>we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts (2 Pet 1.19)

- B. But Peter wants the church to be aware that just as there were always false prophets in the midst of the true prophets, there will be false teachers in the midst of the church who seek to draw the church away from its secure and true foundation, Jesus Christ.
- C. Throughout the Old Testament, there were false prophets who came in among God's people who were led by demonic forces seeking to lead God's people astray. In the OT there are several specific marks of false prophets:

1. ***The do not speak with divine authority:*** False prophets were those who spoke as the product of their own imaginations and authority. Unlike true prophecy that was carried along by the Holy Spirit, these prophets' testimony was the product of the will of man (cf. 2 Pet 1.21).

<sup>20</sup>But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die (Deut 18.20)

<sup>14</sup>And he Lord said to me: "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds." (Jer 14.14)

2. ***They prophesy a message of peace and safety in contrast to the message of future judgment:*** Throughout the OT, one of the markers of the false prophets was their message of "peace" at the exclusion of a message of judgment. This is specifically important in Peter's day, as the false teachers were rejecting the doctrine of Christ's Second Coming and his judgment (cf. 2 Pet 3.1-8).

<sup>10</sup>Then I said, "Ah, Lord God, surely you have utterly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, 'It shall be well with you,' whereas the sword has reached their very life." (Jer 4.10)

<sup>14</sup>They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. (Jer 6.14)

<sup>10</sup>Precisely because they have misled my people, saying, "Peace," when there is no peace (Ezek 13.10)

3. ***They were condemned to punishment by God:*** The result of the teaching of the false prophets was that they would be judged by God for offering messages of falsehood and deception among his people. This was the certain punishment for leading God's people astray.

<sup>15</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in my name although I did not send them, and who say, "Sword and famine shall not come upon this land": By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed. (Jer 14.15)

- D. Both Jesus and Paul promised that one of the marks of the time between his comings would be the presence of false prophets and deceptive teaching.

<sup>10</sup>And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. <sup>11</sup>And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray (Matt 24.11)

<sup>3</sup>For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup>and will turn away from listening to the truth... (2 Tim 3.3-4)

- E. Peter declares that these false teachers are attempting to ***secretly bring in destructive heresies*** among the church of God. Here, we see the means that are used in the promotion of these teachings. They are often brought in secretly and among those who are easily enticed because they are unsteady in their faith and belief (cf. 2 Pet 2.14).

- F. ***Even denying the Master who bought them:*** One of the elements of the false teachings that are brought in is a denial of the truth of the Master (Jesus Christ) who purchased those in his church. This is a sober declaration that these false teachers were not outside of the church, but were those who claimed and professed to follow Jesus. The denial of their master was likely not in word, but rather through their promotion of a sensual living they functionally denied the Lordship of Jesus.

<sup>18</sup>and having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness (Rom 6.18)

- G. ***Many will follow:*** The most sobering reality that is promised by Peter is that the false teachers will experience success among the church. He declares that many will follow in the way of their deceptive teaching because of the appeal to our own passions, sensuality, and disdain for authority.

- H. In v. 2, Peter demonstrates that these false teachers are driven by their **sensuality**. This speaks of a self-fulfilling posture that does not submit our passions to Jesus in a spirit of obedience. One of the marks of false teaching is a promotion of a self-indulgent (self-expressing, self-fulfilling, self-actualizing) view of the world that casts off teachings of the Scripture as oppressive or legalistic in order to justify patterns of sin and unrighteousness.
1. The most common expression of sensual false teaching that creeps into the church is with relation to a Biblical paradigm of **sexuality**. The Bible declares that our sexuality (including our genderedness) is a stewardship given to us to be ordered under the rule and reign of Christ Jesus. The Bible teaches that human sexuality is to be expressed *exclusively* within the lifelong covenant of marriage between one man and one woman.
  2. Other expressions of sensuality that find their way into the church have to deal with a self-actualizing view of God's love or purpose for our lives. This false gospel subtly distorts the Biblical view of God's love by seeking to orient God's love and acceptance of us around something intrinsically true about us — rather than seeking to orient God's love as being demonstrated toward us in Christ when we were enemies that hated him.
- I. The outcome of the sensuality of the false teachers is that ***the way of truth is blasphemed***. One of the common lies associated with false teaching is that holding to orthodox, traditional doctrines of the Christian faith brings maligning to God's name. However, Peter is clear that it is in fact that false teachers who cause the way of God's truth to be blasphemed by their false teaching.
- J. Peter concludes this first section by highlighting the truth that although the false teachers question the coming and the judgment of the Lord Jesus, that their condemnation is not idle, nor is it asleep. Here he is introducing an idea that he will not expand on until chapter 3. Essentially, he is stating that God is presently working, and although they do not experience judgment *today* for their false teaching, it is not because God is validating or pleased with their teaching. Rather, it is because he is merciful and slow to anger, desiring to give people time to repent (cf. 2 Pet 3.9).

### III. THE CERTAINTY OF JUDGMENT AND DELIVERANCE (2 PET 2.4-10A)

- A. Peter now moves to undermine the concept that these teachers believe that there is no condemnation or judgment because of their heresy and unrighteousness. In order to demonstrate the reality of their coming judgment, he uses three portraits from the Scripture to demonstrate the severity of God's justice as its expressed toward the wicked.
1. **Angels who sinned:** The first example Peter gives is of the angels who sinned and were consigned to the underworld in pits of darkness. This is most likely a reference to the "sons of God" who left their place in heaven to have immoral relationship with women as recounted in Genesis 6.
 

<sup>6</sup>And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day (Jude 6)

<sup>2</sup>the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive... they took as their wives any they chose (Gen 6.2)
  2. **The Flood:** The second example given by Peter is the ancient world that was destroyed because of wickedness at the time of the flood. In this example, Peter highlights Noah and the seven from his family that were protected from God's judgment because of their righteousness.
  3. **Sodom and Gomorrah:** The final example given is of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Peter emphasizes the "ash" and the "extinction" of these cities because of the vile wickedness that was performed in them. Here, like the flood, Peter highlights the preservation of Lot and his family because of righteousness.

- B. The three examples are intended to show the certainty of God’s judgment *even though* it did not happen immediately. Within these examples is an implicit warning: Christians are warned against walking in unrighteousness and sensual living as promoted by the false teachers. This calls us to a spirit of sobriety as we seek to walk before the Lord with a spirit of obedience.
- C. Peter concludes his list of examples by declaring that these portraits also demonstrate that God is able to rescue the godly. Peter wants believers to be confident that God knows how to deliver the righteous from trials and testing — even when walking through times of darkness and unrighteousness. Like Noah and Lot, God knows how to save those who belong to him. Christians who are experiencing the testing of false teaching need to live with a confidence that God knows how to keep them and deliver them.

#### IV. HOLY UNREST AND STEADFAST CONFIDENCE

- A. The portrait painted in this chapter could lead us to despair and discouragement if we misunderstand the purpose of Peter’s warnings. This chapter is designed to ***awaken the church*** and bring us into a place of ***sobriety and resoluteness*** in our pursuit of the truth and holiness — not to bring us to a place of hopeless despair.
- B. Hearing these words is intended to stir us to action as we seek to grow in conformity with God’s truth in our lives.

<sup>13</sup>I think it right... to stir you up by way of reminder (2 Pet 1.13)

<sup>1</sup>This is now the second letter that I am writing to you... stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder (2 Pet 3.1)

- C. Such warnings and sober portraits of reality should stir our hearts to seek to grow in agreement with God’s heart through alignment with his word. We cannot afford to be apathetic about gaining the knowledge of God (his character, emotions, person, etc.) and wisdom (his will, desires, evaluations, etc.).
- D. Growing in agreement with God’s truth through the word will lead to greater alignment with his heart and evaluations. We want to love what God loves and hate what he hates. Alignment with God’s desires, his design, and his will is the most desirable way. It is the only way of true and lasting fulfillment.

<sup>7</sup>you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions. (Ps 45.7)

- E. In his discussion on the certainty of judgment and deliverance, Peter highlights two outcomes that will be seen in the righteous as we seek to delight in God’s truth and stand with him.
  1. ***Holy unrest***: Peter highlights that Lot’s righteous soul was tormented by the wickedness and perversion of the people of Sodom. Although he was righteous, he ***saw*** and ***heard*** their lawless deeds day after day. One of the marks of growing in agreement with God’s word (*delighting in his truth*) is a grieved spirit over the sinfulness of the world around us. As we walk through our world, our hearts *ought to* break with the brazenly sinful lawlessness that abounds around us. Our tolerance of realities that God calls evil (movies we watch, places we go, etc.) gives evidence to our complacency and dullness of heart. Grieving over these realities does not lead to “circling the wagons”, vitriol against those who are sinning, or a spirit of judgmentalism. Rather, the outcome of a tormented soul is ***intercession*** and ***witness***.

<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 (2 Pet 3.8)

2. ***Steadfast confidence***: Peter also highlights that a growing agreement with God’s truth will give a steadfast confidence to his people that we know he will ultimately deliver us. The Lord knows who are his!

<sup>4</sup>but the righteous shall live by his faith (Hab 2.4)