

Part 18: We Won't Get Fooled Again

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August 23, 2020

There are few things in life more frustrating than being led astray. We hate being taken advantage of. In fact I think that part of the reason our political and cultural dialogue is so polarizing is because both sides want more than anything to not be the side that is being duped.

Whether it's our Facebook comments, the caution we show when shopping on Craigslist, or the apprehension we have when the King of a foreign country emails us wanting bail money for his daughter, we put a lot of effort into making sure we are not bamboozled.

This desire for truth is on one hand a good desire. God designed us to live for truth but unfortunately Genesis 3 shows how despite our best efforts, humanity is often led astray. When Adam and Eve listened to the shady serpent salesman, they turned down a lifetime of joy for the false promise of a get rich quick scheme.

The result is that sin has corrupted our hearts, and the presence of this sin means that we will often be taken advantage of. Despite our best efforts, and our rebellious attempt to change this in the Garden, we are not God. We don't know everything. We can be duped, tricked, embarrassed and deceived in so many areas in life.

In the book of 2 Peter, the Apostle Peter is writing to churches and to people just like us. And in a world where we will often find ourselves the victim of a bad scheme or shoddy sales pitch, Peter is showing us one place where we must not, cannot not, and by the help of his words today, will not be duped.

According to Peter, every other place in this world might leave you deceived. But to be deceived in this place is to suffer the direst of all consequences. To be tricked on a loan application might hurt your credit, but to be deceived on that nature of what the gospel is, and to instead follow a false gospel, is fall into a devastatingly fatal trap.

Today Peter is going to warn us about False Teachers. These are not bad teachers. These are not ill-qualified teachers. These are false teachers who seek to lead people astray on what it looks like to be saved by Jesus Christ.

As you heard the text read for us earlier, you were probably shocked by some of the language and imagery Peter used. But as we will see today, Peter is speaking as such because he wants us to know the true realities which are at play in our world today. He wants us to be spared the ultimate shame of misunderstanding, misrepresenting and missing out entirely on the good news of what Jesus has done for you.

Our big picture today is going to be this: The truth of the gospel exposes the lies of sin and the safety of following Jesus. We are going to see this in four parts today, all of which key on these false teachers that are infiltrating the church in Peter's time. We are going to see first **The Danger of False Teachers**, and then we are going to see the three errors of false teachers: **False Teachers are Wrong About Comfort**, **False Teachers are Wrong about Morality**, **False Teachers are Wrong about Freedom**.

Our first point is going to be **The Danger of False Teachers**, and it's here where Peter is going to set the table for everything which is going to follow. We've been out of 2 Peter for a couple weeks now, so to better help us understand the context of what is going on, I'm actually going to start reading today in **2 Peter 1:19-2:3**.

So the logic of Peter's argument is this: God's prophetic word was proclaimed through prophets in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament. Those words were God's very words written with the full authority of God exactly how God wanted them to be written.

But even when that was going on, there were false prophets back then competing against God's authority. So too, Peter now says to his young churches, false teacher will also be among you. And the implication we have is that if there were around back then in the OT, if they were around back then in Peter's day, then we can assume that these false teachers are around in our day as well.

What are these false teachers trying to do? They are trying to exploit you with false words. They want to greedily extort you for their own benefit.

How do we then identify these threats? There are three things we must see in this text about false teachers. First, Peter shows us that ***they appeared at one point to be Christian***.

He says in verse 1 that these teachers are denying the Master, that is Jesus, who bought them. He's saying that at one point it seemed that these teachers were bought by Jesus' blood, confessed faith and were baptized just as you were.

The danger of false teachers is that they don't tell us that they're false teachers. Which means this: What makes these teachers so dangerous is not that they are setting up their pulpit far off from true Christianity, but instead they sit very near to it. These false teachers are not denying the divinity of Jesus. That would clearly be wrong. They are not denying the Trinity. We could easily see that as wrong. They are not even denying that Jesus died for our sins.

From what we will see in the rest of our text today is that these false teachers could have gotten up and preached that Jesus is the son of God who came to take away the sins of the world and yet he says they speak false words which create destructive heresies. The word heresy is simply like "sect" or a "spin-off" of what is true. It's not that these words are so far from the gospel which makes them dangerous, it's that they actually seek to get close enough to it that it's hard to discern the difference.

We live in a world just like Peter, just like the Old Testament prophets where we cannot simply assume that preachers, authors, or celebrity Christians who use gospel language are true teachers of the gospel.

This is where Peter wants us to know the second truth about these false teachers. ***Their false teaching is unveiled by their actions***. Look back at **2 Peter 2:2**.

What is the danger of these false teachers? The danger is that they might confess a biblical articulation of the gospel but their lives preach that you can confess Christ and continue to live for all of the sensual and sinful pleasures of the world and still be fine.

Three times in our text today Peter is going to use the word sensual to describe the conduct of these teachers. The word simply means abandoning any restraint on one's self. It's total, uncontrolled, self-gratification. This can be in areas of greed, money, sexuality, gluttony, whichever area you can think of.

Peter alludes to the attractiveness of their life style. It is dangerous precisely because it is attractive. I do not think that in our modern America there is a heresy more attractive to us than this. I want to speak specifically to the college students who are back this week. You will encounter on this campus and on your Twitter timelines, bold and outspoken voice trumpeting Christ but who simultaneously invite you whether in word or in their deeds to live according to the desires of sin.

Now I want to clarify something here. Peter is not saying that anyone who sins in sensual ways is a false teacher. Peter has a word for Christians who struggle with sin: Christians. Peter isn't talking about people who sometimes fail in their walk with Jesus and have heartfelt repentance over those issues. Instead he is speaking to those who do not find these actions to be sinful, or those who see no need to repent over how they are living.

To find someone who thinks they can come to church on Sunday and spend the rest of the week living for the glories of the flesh is to not find a weak Christian but a heretical one.

In fact there is a lifestyle Peter says that might not utter a single word but which ends up blaspheming the way of truth. This is the third thing he wants us to know about the danger of false teachers: ***Their lives are anti-evangelism.***

Here's Peter's quick tip on how to live like a heretic: Proclaim Christ with your mouth and deny Christ with your life. The word Peter uses to describe this lifestyle is blasphemous. That basically means that it slanders and belittles the gospel. Look at how Jesus was introduced in **Matthew 1:21**.

Jesus came to save people from their sins. That is the evangelistic message of the gospel. So to proclaim a gospel message which allows people not to be saved from their sins, but instead to go back to living in their sins is to undo the very saving which Jesus came to offer!

This is the sneaky danger of false teachers. And to better help us understand these teachers and to resist them, Peter is now going to give us the anatomy of false teachers.

He does this first by showing the primary aspect of theology that these men and women deny. Why do these people live like this even when they seem to claim Christ? Because they deny that God will ultimately judge sin. Look at how Peter transitions into his next point: **2 Peter 2:3b**.

Why is it that Peter spent the bulk of chapter 1 calling believers to listen to God's word? Because it is these false teachers who deny the truth of God's word when it comes to matters of judgment. Look at how Peter states this in **2 Peter 2:9b-10a**.

In talking about judgement he says those who live for sin and reject authority will not be spared. The way in which many people will think that they can safely live in unrepentant sin is that they despise the authority of God's word. They deny that God will judge those who continually live in sin.

This is where Peter wants to point out that **False Teachers are Wrong About their Comfort**.

Peter is now going to give three examples and one big claim in this next portion and I want you to see if you can follow his argument. His three examples are all coming from the Old Testament and if you are unfamiliar with the stories I think you can still understand the point that Peter is trying to make.

Read with me: **2 Peter 2:4-10**.

Did you catch Peter's main argument? All three of his examples highlight the judgement which God has given in history to those who continue to do evil.

Peter first mentions the angels that sinned against God. Here these angelic beings rebelled against God, but even as angles they were not spared judgment. God has put them in chains and they too will be judged for their sinful actions.

Then there was the people during Noah's day. Genesis 6 tells us their hearts were only evil continually. The whole earth was living for the passion of the flesh and they were judged for it and perished in the flood. Only Noah and his family were spared because they obeyed God.

Then there was the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, two sister cities who God destroyed because of their total depravity, violence and sexual misconduct. Peter says that they were destroyed as an example of what would happen to the ungodly.

But Lot, who trusted God and pursued righteousness, was spared.

What is the point here? Peter says if God judged the angels, if God judged the earth but saved Noah, if God judged Sodom and Gomorrah and spared Lot, then what: **2 Peter 2:9-10a**.

Then God knows how to judge and how to save.

What is your relationship to God's judgment like? Do you cringe when it is read? This text is helpful text for us to understand because not only do we see the wages of sin, but we actually see the reality of it. When we get to the latter part of this chapter we will see that sin is not a private affair.

Sin is not a victimless crime. Sin is an offense against God and it is always predatorial to those who are around us. We live in a culture which cries for justice and it's only in the doctrine of God's just punishment of the evil doer that cries for justice are ultimately satisfied.

I watched a documentary about a group of Muslims who escaped ISIS rule and who are leaking footage of the atrocities ISIS is afflicting in the Middle East. To try and silence these dissenters the Islamic State has rounded up the family members of these media members, and started videoing their executions and putting them up on the internet.

ISIS was sending this video to convince these people that if they stopped their resistance their life would get easier. The documentary showed one of these Muslims watching the execution of his own father. But instead of yielding to the false promise of ISIS, this young man, said that what he was doing was important work and that he would trust that Allah would repay the murders of his father in his judgment.

Dear Christians, we of all people who see and believe the one and only true God, must also learn in the face of temptation to recognize the warning and the vindication that comes from God's judgment.

In the face of people and lifestyles which try to lure you away from the holiness of Jesus and into the false comfort of sin, remember judgment. God will punish them, but you, God's righteous will be rescued! This trial will not endure!

What a great hope, but a hope we must understand for certain. In describing the false prophets of the day Jeremiah says, **Jeremiah 8:11**. Where false prophets proclaim peace when there is no real peace, how can you know that you actually have peace with God? That you will not be those who are judged but those who are saved?

Because the truth is everyone deserve this judgement. In the early 1900's the London Times asked some of their best thinkers the question: "What is wrong with the world?" In looking at the state in which things were this seemed to be an honest and important question.

One pastor, by the name of G.K. Chesterton replied with a lengthy answer. He wrote, "Dear Sirs, I am."

Chesterton understood that he too was broken and part of the problem. He too at one point rejected Jesus. We all have rejected Jesus. Lot tried to offer his daughter to a crowd of violent men. Noah got drunk and made a fool of himself after the flood.

If our hope of avoiding this judgment is based on us becoming righteous on our own, then this judgment is for all of us. But this is the good news of the gospel.

The good news of the gospel is that you are a sinner, but Jesus took your punishment for you, freed you from its curse and covered you with his righteousness. The gospel says that if you've been saved by Jesus then you've also been changed by Jesus. The gospel isn't that you won't sin. The gospel is that you begin to see sin for the danger it is and you choose in weakness and in strength to pursue Jesus as your greatest pleasure.

False teachers confess the death of Christ so that they might live for themselves. True Christians die to Christ so that they might live for him.

Why do we trust that Jesus is better than sin? Because sin is gross. A life of living for the world's joys seems to be delightful, but it's really not.

It's become common to see stories on the internet of food service workers being fired for posting videos of the way certain restaurants prepare or store their food. In these videos we see the food that we often buy, and we see what it actually looks like and it gives us a sort of, "ew" factor.

What Peter is about to do is post the video that shows the disgusting hearts of those who preach false doctrines. Those who promote with their words and their lives this false-gospel are often seen as super spiritual and caring. They call to us boasting in freedom and a desire to help you flourish. But this is where Peter shows the true nature of their hearts as he now shows us: **False Teachers are Wrong About their Morality.**

Read with me **2 Peter 2:10b-18**.

I don't know about you, but that's quite the Yelp review.

You see when we see the outspoken Christian on campus leaving the party with a new girl every night, we might think that to be a wonderful life. When you see the Instagram celebrity presenting the satisfaction of materialism, and calling you to participate in it, you might think it to be a generous offer. When you find your favorite preacher telling you that you can stop avoiding sin because Jesus loves you, you might find what seems to be the most helpful encouragement.

But Peter has unmasked what you've really found. Waterless springs, blots and blemishes, irrational animals, predatorial and lustful eyes, opportunistic feeders, and selfishness masked in sincerity.

Peter is saying to his church, and I don't want to assume that it is not also in our church, that sitting in this room with you are those who boast in their deception while they sit at the table with you. They want to entice unsteady souls, they want to grab those who are trying with all their might to escape the clutches of sin.

Nothing makes sin more comfortable than company. So these false teachers prey upon the weak. They prey on the new converts with the old lusts of sin. They feast on the unsteady calling them to comfort of what was once solid.

Here is the truth. Sin sucks. Until Jesus comes to take us to glory, even the best Christian will wrestle with a desire to run to sin. You will have temptations to give way to sin.

And in those moments there are two voices who will call out to you. There are those who will say, "Cast aside your cares, and come drink from the well of sin. Jesus loves you. Judgment has been removed. Enjoy the world here." But behind that veil is the rot of selfish lies.

The other voice is the voice which cries out: "**Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**" (Matt. 11:28-30)

This voice, this heart is offered by the one who doesn't deny judgment, but who has offered to bear it for you. Which friend would you turn to? Which voice would you heed?

Because here is the last point today: **False Teachers are Wrong About their Freedom.**

Here we see the beauty of the true gospel by seeing the delusion of false gospels: **2 Peter 2:19-23.**

False Teachers call you to sin because they boast that Christ has freed you so that you can safely sin. But Peter says, this is slavery. There is no freedom here. You are bound to something which can never satisfy, never has anyone sinned so much that they said: "I've finally had enough."

But Jesus actually frees us by giving us desires for himself.

These false teachers say they have received the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, but they turn away, they reject what Jesus has clearly said, they set themselves up as their own authority.

But for the true believer look at what that knowledge does! **2 Peter 1:3-4.**

To truly know Jesus is to realize that Jesus has delivered us from having to choose what is sinful. We finally have freedom to choose what is faithful. We have the freedom to choose Christ. We have the freedom to be enslaved not to sin which leads to death but to Jesus who satisfies us with his glory.

Look at how Paul puts it **Romans 6:17-19.**

Dear church, do not be deceived. There will be those who seem to be Christian in your life who attempt to call you away from the gospel but those who are truly saved will endure! They will see the joy of what their master has done for them and they will trust him over and above the false love of sin.

To those who want a better promise than judgment, pursue the righteousness which Jesus gives. To those who want a better prophet and a caring leader, entrust yourself to the one who didn't come to prey on you, but the one who came to serve you. To you who want freedom, lay down the chains of sin and put on the freedom that comes from living for the glory of this generous Master.