

Studies in Second Peter

"Truth or Consequences"

Second Peter 2:1-9

Introduction

Some years ago I was visiting a patient in the psych ward. As I was getting ready to leave, another patient, a woman, came up to me and asked if I was a pastor. I said, "Yes," and she began to tell me her sad story. She had fallen on hard times financially; her landlord had threatened to evict her. She was a Christian and her Church family encouraged her by telling her to have enough faith to believe God would provide the money. She needed only to speak the word of faith, they told her, and God would be obligated to respond to her request. She was a "King's kid," and God wanted only the very best for her.

Well, she diligently spoke what she thought was the word or words of faith... But she was evicted when no money materialized. With nowhere to go, she returned to her Church for help. They told her that the eviction was **her fault** because she **did not have the faith** to believe God; and since she did not have enough faith, there was nothing they could do for her.

She was in the psych ward for slashing her wrists. After all, what hope was there if God Himself had rejected her for her lack of faith?

God had not rejected her. Her Church had deceived her. Their deception had led to her destruction.

False teaching in the Church is no light matter. It can mean the difference between life and death; or at least affect the quality of your spiritual life.

The apostle Peter took up the subject of false teaching in Chapters Two and Three of his second letter. We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 The Lord Is Coming: Why Listen To Destructive Lies?, and #2 The Lord Is Coming: Why Not Live A Delivered Life?

#1 The Lord Is Coming:
Why Listen To Destructive Lies?
(v1-3)

The context for Peter's comments was his strong insistence that Jesus Christ is coming back to earth to rule over the kingdom of God. There were, however, false teachers who were denying the return of Jesus. The surprise is that their destructive lies came *from within the Church*:

2 Peter 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you...

In the Old Testament God spoke to His "people" through the "prophets." Many "false prophets" came along, seeking to deceive them. In our New Testament times, now that we have the completed Bible, God raises-up gifted teachers of His inspired Word. Many "false teachers" come along, seeking to deceive you.

The fact that they are "among you" needs to be stressed. These individuals attend your Church and seem for a time to be right-on.

What kinds of clues are there that someone is a false teacher? Peter gave you two things to look for in verses one: They will *add to* and *subtract from* God's Word.

First: They add to God's Word.

2 Peter 2:1 ... who will secretly bring in destructive heresies...

"Secretly bring in" literally means *to bring in alongside*. "Heresies" is a word that means a *self-chosen opinion*. It doesn't mean that you can never state an opinion about the Bible. It means you cannot change the meaning of the Bible to fit your opinions. A false teacher brings in opinions alongside God's Word as if they were true.

As an example, I would suggest the way many people have brought in secular psychology alongside the Bible and teach it as if it were God's truth. The fathers of secular psychology are men like Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, and Abraham Maslow. They gave their opinions about human nature. These men, and others like them, claim to know something about the soul and the spirit when God tells you plainly that His Word holds the key to unlocking your soul and spirit and healing you. Carl Jung, for example, freely admits he received insight from a supernatural spirit-guide. When Christians borrow from these men and others like them, and bring their opinions alongside the Bible, they are adding false teaching to the Bible.

Second, false teachers subtract from God's Word:

2 Peter 2:1 ...even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.

Let's have a doctrinal moment before we discuss this verse. Peter referred to Jesus as "the Lord Who bought them." Mankind is depicted in the Bible as being slaves to sin. Slaves could be "bought" out of slavery and set free. When Jesus died on the Cross at Calvary, He paid the price necessary to buy and set free **all** men for **all** time. His death upon the Cross makes possible the salvation of all men... *But only those who believe by faith are saved.*

I've come to understand that the false teachers Peter described were **never saved**. They professed faith in Jesus and were baptized, but they were never truly born-again. Peter will describe them as dogs who return to their own vomit and pigs who return to the mud (2:22). It would seem from that description and from other indications that they never had a change in their nature. They were never sheep, but remained dogs and pigs.

What were these men "denying" about the Lord? In the context of this letter, we have seen already and will see more clearly in Chapter Three that they were denying the literal, physical return of Jesus to judge the world and establish His kingdom on earth. Peter went on to say, "**and bring on themselves swift destruction.**" They could deny the return of Jesus all they wanted but He *is* coming and will judge them when He returns.

In a general sense we would say that false teachers *subtract* something from God's Word. For example: Many Churches and Christian colleges and universities have subtracted things like the inspiration and inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible; they have subtracted the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, His literal, physical resurrection and return to earth. They rely upon the opinions of men brought alongside the Scripture in ways that subtract from it.

It is important you recognize false teachers:

2 Peter 2:2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

We all should honestly admit to ourselves that we are too easily influenced by the opinions of others. I've known lots of believers who looked rock-solid but were led astray and followed the "destructive ways" of false teaching.

One terrible consequence is that unbelievers are looking on. When they see believers who have shared with them about Jesus now following after some addition or subtraction, the "truth will be blasphemed."

How do these false teachers influence you?

2 Peter 2:3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words...

"Covetousness" could be translated *extortion*. "Deceptive" is the word where we get our word *plastic*. It means they twist words to fit what they want to get across. By extortion they exploit you by twisting words.

Let's break it down further. Extort means *to coerce or intimidate*. False teachers coerce you and intimidate you. It can refer to their physical mannerisms. But it can also refer to playing upon your spiritual fears. False teaching usually has an element in it that makes you think you are missing-out on something; that you are not a full, free Christian unless you attend or agree. It's an extortion of your spirit that sets you up to be exploited by their twisted words.

God is fully aware of these men and their lies:

2 Peter 2:3 ...for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

In verses four through nine Peter will give you examples of how God's judgment suddenly comes upon those who disobey and deceive. The point for you to ponder: **Why be deceived by their destructive lies?** Your life is far too short for you to wander off of the narrow path onto some doctrinal rabbit trail that will only leave you ruined. The unsaved family and friends who are watching your progress as a Christian are too dear to you for you to get involved in teachings that blaspheme God.

The Bible is complete. It needs no addition or subtraction. Whatever you ever hear... **Test it** by searching out the Scriptures to see if it is the truth. Be patient. False teachings, and false teachers, usually get worse and are exposed over time. *Don't let anyone extort you.*

#2 The Lord Is Coming:
Why Not Live A Delivered Life?
(v4-9)

Verse nine is a summary of verses four through eight:

2 Peter 2:9 ... the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,

God "knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations..."
"Temptations" here means your stressful external circumstances.
"Knows how to deliver you" means God can **sustain** you in your stressful circumstances until He sees fit to **rescue** you from them.

Peter did two things in these next few verses:

1. He showed you that God does, in fact, bring judgment in His own good time.
2. He shared with you that you can live a delivered life even in the midst of destructive lies.

We want to concentrate on the encouragement of living a delivered life. Peter gave two examples: Noah lived a delivered life despite the

Global Flood; and Lot lived a delivered life despite the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Flood:

2 Peter 2:4 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;
2 Peter 2:5 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;

You can read the historical account of this in Genesis Chapters Five through Ten. God saw that the "ancient world" had become corrupt and full of violence. In particular, some of the fallen angels who had followed the devil in his rebellion against God were somehow co-habiting with human females, producing weird offspring. God determined to bring judgment upon both the "angels who sinned" and "the ancient world."

The "angels who sinned," the particular fallen angels involved in co-habiting with women, were "cast down to hell and delivered... into chains of darkness." "Hell" is the word *Tartarus* and refers to a dungeon-chamber. These angels are chained in the darkness of Tartarus. As for mankind, God did indeed bring the global Flood to destroy "the world of the ungodly."

Peter's readers knew all this; he was using these events to share with them that God not only will judge, but He is able to deliver those who are godly. Noah and his family - his wife, his three sons and their wives - were the only eight people to be delivered. Some creation scientists put the total population of the earth before the flood in the billions!

Not only was God able to deliver them... They were able to lead a delivered life! Noah was "a preacher of righteousness." Before he built the ark, he probably built a pulpit from which he could share with all the curiosity seekers and mockers who came to see his project. Even in such an ungodly, corrupt and violent age, Noah found a godly wife... Raised children... And found wives for his sons. In the end it was better to have lived a delivered life than fall prey to destructive lies.

Sodom and Gomorrah:

2 Peter 2:6 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;

You know, archaeologists have found the ancient sites of Sodom and Gomorrah. Using the Bible as their guide, they discovered an ancient city... Then another sister city. They have proven that both cities were destroyed at the same time by a cataclysmic fire. However, in typical arrogance, ungodly scientists will not call these cities "Sodom" and "Gomorrah." They've named them Bab Edh-dreh (sp?) and Numerei. They speculate that the cities were destroyed by some natural calamity and that the writers of the Bible wanted to use the natural destruction to scare people into living moral lives.

You can read the history in Genesis Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen. Peter didn't mention the sin of these people, only saying they were "ungodly." In a similar passage in the Book of Jude you read,

Jude 1:7 KJV Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to **fornication**, and going after **strange flesh**, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Sexual sin was the prominent form of ungodliness for which God turned those cities into ashes. It should be "an example" to our nation, but people are doing their own thing, inventing their own morality and sexuality.

Our focus is on living a delivered life under such stressful circumstances. One man did live such a life:

2 Peter 2:7 and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked

2 Peter 2:8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds) -

That Lot was a "righteous man" comes as a surprise if you've read his story in Genesis. He comes across as greedy, cowardly, and weak, attracted toward the sinful cities that he finds so hard to leave. Through Peter's letter the Holy Spirit tells you that Lot was nevertheless a believer.

Lot is an example to you, *not* that it is OK to lead and live a compromised life because you'll be saved in the end. *God forbid!* He is an example to you that even if you are surrounded by wickedness, and you are "oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked," and your "righteous soul" is "tormented" "from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds," ***you can still live a delivered life!***

Just in passing I can't help but note: Jude mentioned their sexual sins, and Peter used the word "lawless." The most shocking aspect of what is happening in our country with regards to issuing marriage licenses to homosexual couples is that it is lawlessness.

Lot brought many of his problems upon himself. You and I find ourselves born into a society that is as filthy and lawless as Sodom and Gomorrah. We can remain righteous and live the delivered life.

The delivered life is simply believing God to sustain you until He chooses to rescue you. He did it for Noah and his family; He did it for Lot. Their "temptations" were much worse than ours. Even so, they were righteous men, godly men, among the ungodly. So can we be righteous men and women among the ungodly - no matter how bad it gets. God will rescue us in His time. Jesus will return.

Conclusion

I want to take a quick, final look at Peter's examples.

It is interesting to note that at some point in the future there will be a global tribulation that lasts seven years. During those seven years you read about the release of certain incarcerated demons upon the earth (Revelation Chapter Nine). These are perhaps the same fallen angels who were reserved in chains of darkness. By using these as his example, Peter was pointing his readers (including us) to the Great Tribulation.

Noah and his family remained on the earth but were kept safe during and through the Global Flood. I see Noah and his family as a type of Israel - Jews who must go through the Great Tribulation on earth but who will be kept safe.

Lot was treated differently; he had to be snatched-away from the cities before God's judgment could fall from heaven. He is a type of those who must first be snatched-away before the Great Tribulation can begin. He's a type of the Rapture of the Church.

God is always delivering you by giving you grace to sustain you no matter your circumstances. He will rescue you in the Rapture... **Very soon!**