

Sermon: God's Judgment Is Coming on False Teachers

Text: II Peter 2

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Introduction: It is not always easy to tell the difference between genuine and counterfeit. Let's talk about money for example.

“As long as we live in a fallen world, counterfeiting will exist. There will always be someone who, for personal gain, will use an imitation of the real to lure others to something of no value. Banks deal with this problem every day and train their tellers to be alert to the possibility that some of the paper currency they are handed may not be authentic. Their first line of defence is to know the real. They work with and handle the real every day until the feel and appearance of the authentic is deeply engrained in their minds. When a counterfeit bill passes through their hands, an alarm goes off in their minds. Then they examine specific areas of the bill which will prove the true identity of a counterfeit.”

- Passing Faith's Tests With Love And Joy, Jack W. Hayford, Executive Editor.

Illus. Bernie Madoff is reported to have pulled off a \$50 billion Ponzie scheme. All kinds of people and charitable foundations (13,000+) invested with Madoff believing everything was fine. And it was, until they tried to redeem their investment.

Virtually for everything of real value there is a counterfeit. That is also true spiritually as Peter tries to warn his original listeners and ultimately us.

To begin with, I want to discuss two kinds of people with you: the righteous and the unrighteous. This is a biblical principle that everyone: Christian and non-Christian must understand.

The Apostle John agrees with Peter and sums it up in his first letter: [I John 3:7-12 \(NIV\)](#) ⁷Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. ⁸He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. ⁹No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. ¹¹This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹²Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

Yet we know that there is more than good works to being righteous. We all can point to people who are not Christians who perform good deeds.

The Apostle Paul joins in this discussion in his letter to the Romans: **Romans 3:20-24 (NIV)** ²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. ²¹But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²²This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Righteousness is about one's relationship with Jesus and there are obvious ways to tell the difference between prophets and teachers who are not from God.

I. False Teachers Have a Plan for You.

II Peter 2:1 (NIV) ¹But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.

A. teach destructive heresy.

We hear heresy from the beginning chapters of the Bible.

Genesis 3:2-5 (NIV) ²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” ⁴“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Heresy has its origin in Satan working through man, not the Holy Spirit.

We hear modern so-called Christian theologians deny the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, and bodily resurrection of our Lord.

John Dominique Crossan has said, “Two people could believe opposite things about Jesus and still have good results.” Oh, really? My friends, it does matter what you believe about many things. What we believe about God is critical for our eternal lives.

False Teachers Have a Plan for You ...

B. provide bad examples of behavior

It is bad enough to lead an unrighteous life, but when it is raised as an example for others to follow, that's yet another thing.

Listen to how Peter describes the shameful ways of these false teachers. They don't seem to know better.

II Peter 2:10-14a (NIV) ¹⁰This is especially true of those who **follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature** (i.e. they are not guided by the Spirit of God) **and despise authority** (they are lawless and disrespectful. They feel rules do not apply to them). **Bold and arrogant**, these men are not afraid to **slander** celestial beings (no common sense at all, like a 12-year old challenging a full-grown man to a fight. They will lose); ¹¹yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord.

^{12a}But these men **blaspheme in matters they do not understand**. ^{13bc} Their idea of pleasure is to **carouse in broad daylight** (there is little shame anymore for things that are clearly immoral). They are blots and blemishes, **reveling in their pleasures** while they feast with you (Lord's supper reference). ¹⁴With eyes full of adultery, **they never stop sinning**;

Their entire agenda is:

C. exploit you

II Peter 2:14b-15 (NIV) they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! ¹⁵They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness.

These false teachers have less sense, according to the story, than a donkey.

I love music, art, literature, movies and other media, but if you look at what is generally being produced, you have to wonder if a steady diet is spiritually healthy.

II Peter 2:18-19 (NIV) ¹⁸For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

So that you won't be deceived and remain faithful to God and His Word,

II. God Has a Plan for You.

A. He will provide godly examples.

In our text, Noah and his family, and Lot are mentioned as examples of righteous people. To be clear though, having a “right standing” with God does not make a person “perfect” in the traditional sense - and certainly not sinless. Both of these O.T. characters had obvious sins, but you have to look at the desire of their hearts.

A godly and righteous person will want to please God, and will be offended by sin. Lot was “distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men.” What he saw people doing in his culture and time tormented his soul. I wonder if much of what we see and hear happening in our time, offends us? Maybe, it should!

We live in a very busy time, too busy, I believe. People have pushed God and His Church to the periphery of their lives. There seems to be not enough time for God unless we are in trouble or crisis. The word translated “ungodly” (ασεβον) “suggests that they had no time whatever for God.” -Green, p. 110

B. God will rescue us.

II Peter 2:5-9 (NIV) ⁵if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; ⁶if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; ⁷and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men ⁸(for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— ⁹if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

God has demonstrated his ability to save - time and time again. If we prove to be faithful over the course of our lives, He will rescue us as well.

III. God Has a Plan for False Teachers.

A. He will teach them a lesson.

II Peter 2:19 (NIV) ¹⁹They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

The word *depravity* carries the idea of corruption and destruction. This is the difference between death and the life Jesus offers. Everyone must know there is a difference between freedom and license. The former honors God, the latter is irresponsible!

The lesson that must be learned before it is too late is one of allegiance. A man can not serve two masters, Jesus said. Seneca once said, “to be enslaved to oneself is the heaviest of all servitudes.” - Green, p. 129

It also may be a math lesson in that there will be an accounting.

Illus. Michael Phelps trained for the Olympics and won 8 Gold medals in swimming. A few years ago he drank too much and was picked up for D.U.I. Recently he smoked marijuana apparently, and now he can't swim for 3 months and Kelloggs says you can't be a part of our advertizing. Can Phelps recover from this? We hope and pray so, but God is not mocked.

Galatians 6:7-8 (NIV) ⁷Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

If sinful, God dishonoring behavior is a habit in people's lives:

B. Destruction is their end.

II Peter 2:3 (NIV) ³In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

It may appear to the untrained eye that ungodly people are getting away with bad behavior, but nothing could be farther from the truth.

II Peter 2:4-5a, 6, 9 (NIV) ⁴For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, (**Tartarus**) putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; ^{5a}if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, ⁶if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; ⁹if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

Q. What do we know about the angels' sin?

A. Pride, rebellion (see **Genesis 6:1-4; Jude 6-7; Revelation 12:7**)

Explain “hell” translation *Tatartus* (booklet on “Afterlife: Where do the dead go?”).

Punishment is eternal and continuing. And what a contrast between the mansions and rooms talked of in **John 14** for Jesus' followers and the gloomy dungeons and underground pits (like silos) or *chains* like Jude describes them (**Jude 6**).

Those that are consigned to this kind of punishment have freely chosen this lifestyle. Peter describes them this way:

II Peter 2:12bc, 13a, 17 (NIV) ^{12bc}They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish. ^{13a}They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. ¹⁷These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.

I do not believe that destruction is meant to mean here: extinction, but the idea of lostness and separation (see same word in **Luke 15** regarding the lost coin, sheep, and son).

Conclusion: I want to try and clear up what I believe to be a false doctrine. A person *can* lose their salvation through neglect and unrighteous living. “Knowing” Jesus and following His example of righteousness will provide you a place in heaven. Willfully walking away, however, may damn your soul, if you do not repent.

Illus. In retail marketing there is an illegal practice called “bait and switch.” It is where a company advertizes it has a certain product to get you into the store only to try and sell you something you did not want that is more expensive.

Satan does that with people. He offers freedom and life without constraints, promising happiness. What a customer actually gets, though, is slavery, death and ultimate sadness.

Illus. I am very concerned for people like Katy Perry who tonight at the Grammys will sing “I Kissed a Girl.” She is the product of a Christian home. Both her parents are ministers. Yet she has clearly walked away from her faith. She was once a Christian singer. Now her music tells the story that sin is acceptable. That is a deadly message for her to give and for her audience to believe. Her music is described as edgy, just like her spiritual life.

Peter has a warning at the end of this second chapter for anyone who is even thinking about walking away from God.

II Peter 2:20 - 22 (NIV) ²⁰If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. ²¹It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. ²²Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.”

It is one thing to have a nice little talk about how some people are going to hell if they don't change their ways, but what is our responsibility in all of this. Are we just critical observers, or do we have a responsibility to say something?

Illus. A person is in a boat floating down the Niagra River above the Falls. They are seemingly unconcerned about the increasing current and warning signs that say not to go beyond this point.

Q. As an onlooker what would be the appropriate response to seeing this?

A. Turn back, don't go any closer and get out of the water ... or how about those Steelers?

I want to encourage you as Christians to provide as good a Christian model as you can both in your deeds and words. Share your faith *outloud*. There is a need for strong godly voices in a stormy sea of false teaching.

Don't be afraid to say something!