

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. 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 Hayford, Executive Editor.*

Illus. How many of you remember the name: Bernie Madoff? He was reported to have pulled off a \$50 billion Ponzie scheme. All kinds of people, including charitable organizations (13,000+) invested in Madoff believing everything was fine. And it was, until they tried to redeem their investment. It was all a fraud.

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 as well.

To begin with, I want to discuss two kinds of people with you: the righteous and the unrighteous. It sounds a lot like wisdom literature in the O.T. that talks in black and white and uses antithetical language and opposite examples to drive home a point. Also John in the N.T. writes this way. What we are about today is a biblical principle that everyone: Christian and non-Christian must understand. The Apostle John agrees with Peter and sums this up in his first letter to the Church: **I John 3:7-12 ESV ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸ Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰ By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. ¹¹ For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹² We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.**

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

The Apostle Paul joins in the discussion in one of his letters:

Romans 3:20-24 ESV 20 For by works of the law no human being[a] will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Footnotes: [a] **Romans 3:20** Greek *flesh*

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 ESV 1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

A. to teach destructive heresy (false teaching).

We hear heresy from the beginning chapters of the Bible.

Genesis 3:2-5 ESV 2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 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.”

There is more to God than knowledge. Heresy has its origin with Satan working through humanity, not the Holy Spirit, as mankind's Guide. We hear modern so-called Christian theologians deny the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, and bodily resurrection of our Lord. Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses are carriers of heresies like that to your very door.

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 and where that eternity will be spent.

B. to provide bad examples of behavior (that even claims to be Christian).

It is bad enough to lead an unrighteous life, but when it is raised up as an example for others to follow, and others are encouraged to join in sin, 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 ESV** ¹⁰ and especially those who indulge (*who go after the flesh*) in the lust of defiling passion (**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 willful (**arrogant**), they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones (**celestial beings**), (**no common sense at all, like a 12-year-old boy challenging a full-grown man to a fight. They are going to lose.**) ¹¹ whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. ¹² But these (**humans**), like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, ¹³ suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. (**There is little shame about anything anymore, and what used to be hidden is now done openly because of seared consciences and no respect for God and His will for His creation**). They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you (Some manuscripts *love feasts*). ^{14a} They have eyes full of adultery, (Or *eyes full of an adulteress*) insatiable for sin (**i.e., they never stop sinning; it's their habit to sin**).

These false teachers/prophets' entire agenda is:

C. to exploit you

II Peter 2:14b-15 ESV ^{14b} They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! ¹⁵ Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing,

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

As a Christian, I love music, art, literature, movies and other media, but if you look at what is generally being produced, even by formerly family-friendly sources like Disney and Hallmark, one has to wonder if a diet of what they are serving up can be good for you. These producers of foul-smelling visual and audio entrees who make fun of people of faith do not deserve our support. And, worst of all, they are arrogant purveyors of products that will ultimately hurt our relationship with Jesus.

II Peter 2:18-19 ESV ¹⁸ For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹ They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

So that you will not be deceived, and so you will remain faithful to God and His Word:
II. God Has a Plan for You.

A. He will provide godly examples (to follow).

In our text, Noah and his family, and even 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. The text reads: Lot was “greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked.” What he saw people doing in his culture and time “tormented his righteous soul.” I wonder if much of what we see and hear happening in our time, offends us? Maybe it should. (Courtroom in S.S.M. custody case - Judge said, you’ll just have to adjust.)

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 never to be enough time for God unless we get into trouble or crisis. The word translated “ungodly” (ασεβων, v. 6) suggests that “they had no time whatever for God.” - Green, p. 110

B. God will rescue us.

II Peter 2:5-9 ESV 5 if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (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); 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,[temptations] and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,

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 ESV 19 They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

The word “corruption” here (*depravity*, NIV) carries the idea of destruction with it. This is the difference between spiritual death and the life Jesus offers. Everyone needs to know there is a difference between freedom and license. The former honors God, the latter is irresponsible, and does not honor God.

The lesson that must be learned before it is too late is one of allegiance. A person cannot 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 Fred Phelps II (born June 30, 1985) is an American former competitive swimmer. He is the most successful and most decorated Olympian of all time with a total of 28 medals. Phelps also holds the all-time records for Olympic gold medals (23). When Phelps won eight gold medals at the 2008 Beijing Games, he broke fellow American swimmer Mark Spitz's 1972 record of seven first-place finishes at any single Olympic Games. What a great swimmer!

But his life has been full of trouble and setbacks as well. At age 19 in November 2004, Phelps was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol in Salisbury, Maryland. In February 2009, a photograph of Phelps using a bong went viral; this resulted in the loss of Kellogg's as a sponsor, as well as a three-month suspension by USA Swimming. In September 2014, Phelps was arrested again, this time on charges of driving under the influence of alcohol and speeding in Baltimore.

Phelps has fought depression, suffered from ADHD, and even been suicidal. He is married and has three children now. Life is full of defeats and wins, but the most important thing anyone can do is accept Jesus Christ as his/her Savior. And by all accounts Michael Phelps did that about 6 years ago. And the question still remains for Phelps and for us - not did I give my life to Jesus, but does he still have it?

Galatians 6:7-8 ESV 7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

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

B. Destruction is their end.

Preachers don't talk about hell or punishment much any more. It's not popular! But listen to Peter here: **II Peter 2:3 ESV** ³ And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

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

II Peter 2:4-6, 9 ESV ⁴ For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell [*Tartarus* - mention booklet - "*Afterlife: Where Do the Dead Go?*] and committed them to chains [*pits*] of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; ⁵ if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; ⁶ if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; ⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,

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

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

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

Those who are consigned to this type of punishment have freely chosen this life-path. Peter describes them in this way: **II Peter 2:12bc-13a, 17 ESV** ^{12bc} But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, ^{13a} suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. **You can earn hell, but not heaven.** ¹⁷ These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved (**completely away from light, any goodness, and God is nowhere to be found**).

I do not believe "destruction" (v. 12) means extinction or annihilation, but the idea of lostness and separation. The same word is used in **Luke 15** regarding the lost coin, lost sheep, and lost son. They are simply removed from being near those who care deeply about them - in this case God!

Conclusion: I want to try and clear up what I believe to be a false doctrine - sometimes called "once saved always saved." It is my opinion a person can lose his/her 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 also 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 don’t want.

Satan does that with people. He offers freedom and life without constraints, promising happiness. What a person really gets is slavery, death and ultimate sadness and eternal dissatisfaction.

Peter has a warning at the end of this second chapter for anyone who is even thinking about walking away from God who is in the church. **II Peter 2:20-22 ESV** ²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹ For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. ²² What the true proverb says has happened to them: “The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.”

It is one thing to give a nice little talk or comment about how some people are going to hell if they don’t change their ways, but what is our responsibility in all this? Are we just critical observers and complainers, 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 Buckeyes? or weather talk - do you think it might rain, today?”

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 also a need for strong godly voices in a stormy sea of false teaching.

Don’t Be Afraid to Say Something!