

Title: The rest of the story
Text: 2 Peter 2:1b-16
Theme: The future of false teachers
Series: 2 Peter
Prop Stmtnt: Facing the reality of false teachers enables you to stay the course in the midst of the inevitable conflict.

Read Text:

2 Peter 2 is a weighty text. These 22 verses are full of warning and the nature of the warnings are detailed and specific. We may be tempted to just move on to passages a little more encouraging, but we need this so that we might be discerning, humble and wise. The text focuses upon the specific sins of false teachers who arise in churches. There have been, there are, and there will always be people who attempt to exploit the trusting relationships that exist amongst believers for their own sinful purposes. Some churches are not even churches because they blatantly ignore God's Word, reject it, twist it or replace it. But this text is talking about false teachers who arise in a true church. It happens. A person says the right things, shows up to the right events, appears to be very concerned about the right things and over time gains an audience and then uses that influence for his own agenda. One by one he starts playing people and poisoning them. I and others see firsthand the affect that these people have on unsuspecting members. When someone says that they have been meeting with or talking with one of these guys, I know exactly how it is going to go. It is hard to watch. As a shepherd, what am I to do? I am to lead you and feed you so that you have discernment. I don't want you to get played. I don't want you to be led astray by those who have their own agenda and blinded by their own sin. So, while 2 Peter 2 is not an easy text but it is timely and needy.

Here, Peter is addressing the specific sins of false teachers. In some cases, they may teach false doctrine. But in many cases, they sound right. They use the right words so we are not suspicious. But it is not just what a person says, it is how they live. Peter addresses the character, the conduct and the destiny of these false teachers. Then Peter refers to the OT account of Balaam that illustrates the big idea. So, the sermon this morning has 3 points: 1) False teachers are blinded by their own arrogance. 2) False teachers are blinded by their own lust. 3) False teachers will be destroyed by their own desires.

1. **False teachers are blinded by their own arrogance** (10b-13a)

A good leader loves and cherishes the church. He sees the church as a flock that is to be fed, led, served so they will flourish. He is willing to be spent in order that the church is served well. A false teacher, on the other hand loves himself and sees the church as an arena where he can be validated, esteemed and puffed up. He is willing for the church to be spent so that he is served like he believes he should be. His entire compass is off. In his pursuit for his own glory he will do things and say things that reveal his heart. Peter describes him/them as

Bold and willful

A. **They do not know what they are dealing with.** (10b-11)

The “glorious ones” is probably a reference to demons. Demons are angelic beings. As believers, we respect them, though we do not need to feel threatened by them. But only idiots act like they can mock demons. These men have no fear when they should be terrified. Their spiritual bravado is impressive to the crowd and plays well to those who think they are spiritual sensations. The truth is, they do not know what they are dealing with. Look at verse 11. Even good angels do not pronounce blasphemous judgments against the demons, even though the good angels are clearly way more powerful than the false teachers.

The people I know who have encountered demonic activity do not speak freely of it and clearly do not speak lightly of it, or flippantly. Do you remember the account of the sons of the high priest in Ephesus whose name was Sceva? They saw the authority that Paul had over the demons and decided to try it themselves. It gained Paul a following, why not them? They learned the hard way. You do not mess with demons.

B. They are willfully ignorant. (12a)

Like irrational animals, creatures of instinct who follow their own base desires, they are blind to what they do not know and don't care. Just like animals who can be lured with bait, then trapped and killed, these false teachers live by their glands. They live owned by their base instincts and will suffer the results of that. They will be caught and they will be destroyed but their arrogance blinds them to that. They will not get away with what they do. But even though that is what will happen to them, we need to be aware of them and for our purposes, we need to do everything we can to be on guard against them and protect our flock from them. This speaks to their arrogance. They are proud and ignorant and because of their hard hearts they have dull ears and blind eyes. The truth means nothing to them. They cannot see it because they don't want to see it. There is no humility, no willingness to seriously consider the possibility that they could be wrong.

C. They will be destroyed. (12b-13a)

Look at (12b-13a) he says that they *will be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing*. People like this will face the music for their sins. We know that some people appear to get away with things for now, but that all will be held accountable one day before God. But the language here makes it sound like many of these false teachers will be exposed sooner rather than later. Over time God will reveal what is going on. These false teachers will be paid back with the very same thing that they dished out on others. Just as they deceived others in order to defraud them, they themselves will be deceived and will be defrauded. Those who use sin to destroy others will themselves be destroyed by that sin.

2. False teachers are blinded by their own lust. (13b-15a)

These guys are wicked. They are lustful, devious, immoral and greedy. They look for people they can draw into their web then use them for their own pleasure. Oftentimes it is sexual. Sometimes it is motivated by greed for money and other times greed for power or esteem. They use people, smoke 'em like a joint and leave their lives smoldering on the side of the road while

they go on to abuse others. But, their destruction of others will be the destruction of themselves. No man is a match for sin. The very sin they use to hurt others will destroy them.

A. Character

Peter describes them as *blots and blemishes*. These words are the exact opposite of being spotless and blameless. In other words, the closer you look at them, the less things in their lives add up. They may be good at hiding things from people who do not look closely, but when you really get to know them, you will see that there are some major character issues. Part of that is likely deception. (*reveling in their deceptions*) They hide the truth, twist the truth, evade giving clear answers and precise definitions. They do not let you know what their true goal is.

V. 14 says *they have eyes full of adultery*. Peter's language is actually even more specific than this. He literally says that they have eyes full of adulterous women. In other words, these guys get involved with the church and try to use their positions in order to find women they can hook up with. They are looking (literally looking) and seeing if there is someone they can move in on. They are looking in order to see if their looks are returned in a way that lets them know that there may be a player they can move in on.

One of the ways that this happens is like this. A guy is a respected leader and seems to have a good influence on others, is trusted and serves in a position of authority. That position automatically gives him a level of trust, and that is how it should be. But, in this case, the guy uses that trust as an opportunity to identify a woman that he thinks may be vulnerable to his game and the game goes like this. He finds a way to communicate with that woman by herself. It may be in a counseling situation, a ministry setting, a social occasion, etc. She may be unsuspecting because of his position, or she may be a bit flattered by the fact that he is paying specific attention to her. He begins grooming her by sharing things with her in order for her to "help him." He shares how his wife doesn't understand him, how he is lonely, discouraged, under a lot of pressure, needs a good friend, and little by little he pulls her into his web where she is made to feel responsible for his happiness. The guy is smooth. He knows what to say. In her mind she is struggling. She knows this is wrong, but he says that he needs her and looks for her affirmation and he says that she is helping him and that if she breaks this off, he may hurt himself. In turn she shares some of her dissatisfactions with her husband or her life. Then one day they cross a line. He tells her that he is sexually frustrated and attracted to her, he compliments her and buys her things and from that point on, it is only a matter of time before the unfaithfulness in word is acted out. When the adulterous relationship is exposed (and it usually is), she not only feels used, but when she discovers that there are other women that he was doing the same thing to, she is incensed at her own foolishness, gullibility, and at his betrayal.

B. Conduct

Peter describes their conduct like this. They revel in daytime. In fact, they count it pleasure to revel in daytime. They become so devoted (addicted to) their own sin, that instead of using the day for work, they use the day for carrying out their schemes for sin. They are insatiable for sin. Every woman is a notch on their belt. They do not care if they destroy their lives, marriages, kids and futures. They just move on leaving body parts in their wake. They entice unsteady souls.

They are constantly looking for new people they can abuse. Instead of hearts trained in godliness, they have hearts trained in greed.

The word for “trained” is an athletic word used to describe the rigorous training and discipline that an athlete goes through in order to perform at a high level. Peter’s point is that these guys are very good. They are skilled in their craft of greed and know how to draw people in and take advantage of them. This greed is not limited to money, but can be a desire for power, food, respect/esteem, and money. The consistent picture that Peter paints is this: What you see is not what you get. What you see is a cover for pure evil. And the consequences are terrible. What is a church to do?

Recognize the power and effect of the gospel.

- Life changing
- Faith giving
- Exciting

We want all of these things, but we have to protect them.

Recognize the reality of and actions of false teachers

Encourage and practice loving discernment.

- If someone tries to draw you away from the body, share secret things with you, encourage you to not say anything – they are probably playing you, stay away from them.
- If someone of the opposite sex tries to come between you and your spouse, run.
- Look out for new believers and new members.

3. **False Teachers will be destroyed by their own desires.** (15b-16)

Back in v.12 Peter describes these false teachers as *creatures of instinct born to be caught and destroyed*. They will be exposed. Like Jude, Peter uses Balaam as an example. The illustration is sobering and needed that we might see the seriousness of this.

Look at these words from Numbers 24.

“...the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,
the oracle of him who hears the words of God,
and knows the knowledge of the Most High,
who sees the vision of the Almighty,
falling down with his eyes uncovered:

I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near:
A star shall come out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;
it shall crush the forehead of Moab
and break down all the sons of Sheth.

Edom shall be dispossessed;
Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed.
Israel is doing valiantly.
And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion
and destroy the survivors of cities!”

This is a prophesy. This is a prophesy spoken by a man who hears the words of God, who has knowledge of God and who has had a vision of God. And this prophesy is very clear. It is about Christ. A star shall come out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise over Israel. And this prophecy says that the enemies of God’s people will suffer and will be dispossessed and destroyed. In fact, you may remember that on the prophet’s Sunday, the first Sunday of Advent, we often read or play this text. But, which prophet gave this prophecy? It is in the book of Numbers. Was it Moses? No, it was actually Balaam. The opening line of this is, “*The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor.*” Balaam knew God’s Word. Balaam knew all about God. God spoke to Balaam and used Balaam to record a powerful prophecy about Christ amongst other prophecies.

You may remember the story. Israel was on the verge of entering the promised land. In order to get into launch position, she went through Moab and the king of Moab (Balak) and the Moabites were terrified of them. So, Balak, sent for Balaam and offered him a lot of money if Balaam would come and pronounce a curse on Israel. Balaam was for sale. Balaam was a prophet who was for sale. But, God would not let him get away with that and would not let Balaam say what he wanted to say in order to get the money and esteem that he craved.

But Balaam did more than that. He advised Balak against attacking Israel with an army, but instead entice Israel with immorality. That is her weak link. Balak apparently shared the same advice with the kings of Midian and they were successful in enticing a large number of the Israelites to give in and the tragic story is told in Numbers 25. Shortly after that event, Israel does go to war with Midian and along with killing the 5 kings of Midian, Numbers 31.8 says, “*And they also killed Balaam, the son of Beor with the sword.*” Do you see why Balaam is used by Peter as an illustration of a false teacher? Balaam says the right things. He knows God’s Word, but he doesn’t fear God’s Word. He doesn’t respect God’s Word. Therefore, you can see why a person who does not tremble before God’s Word is going to speak foolishly and arrogantly about demons. He has no idea what he is dealing with. He does not tremble before God’s Word. To him, God’s Word is a ticket. It is just a means by which he pursues his own desires and that is what makes him a false teacher. That is a danger we must all reckon with.

From the leader’s perspective, here are the warnings:

- If I want esteem and approval, I am tempted to soften or ignore parts of God’s Word with those who may disagree or be uncomfortable.
- If I want money, I am tempted to tell my audience what they want to hear, rather than need to hear.
- If I want peace, I am tempted to be “political” and nuanced instead of principled and clear.
- If I want to be faithful to God, I have to say it all and believe it all, all the time. That is the mark of a true leader. The leader has to figure out who his ultimate audience is.

From the congregation's perspective:

- If I want faithfulness, I need to be willing to hear, embrace, submit to and love all of God's Word.
- If I want faithfulness, I need to expect, encourage, careful expositional preaching that does not entertain, or cater to an audience's demographically driven desires.
- If I want faithfulness I need to champion truth, not personality.