

False teachers

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[0:00] Our Father God, we do echo the prayer that we've sung. Speak, O Lord, till your church is built and the earth is filled with your glory. Speak to us now we pray for that end.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Just going to plug this clicker in. There we go. Who's seen The Traitors? Corinne. Really, only Corinne and myself. That's amazing.

Well, let me describe to you The Traitors. I thought it was a pretty big TV series which was on the BBC over... Clearly not that big, especially if our seven's not seen it.

It was on the BBC over January time. Claudia Winkleman was the host. You had 22 contestants who were taken up to a castle in Scotland.

And they were playing a game where all of them were trying to play as Team Faithful. But Claudia Winkleman, at the beginning of the game, chooses three or four people to be part of this team of traitors.

[1:21] Where they've got to be playing as faithful and try and get to the end and win the money and beat these faithful. Every night they get an opportunity to murder someone.

Not literally. You'll be pleased to know. But what they've got to do is play in disguise. Try and let people not work out that they're faithful.

And I talk about this because every day of play for them, everyone is on the lookout for traitors. He might be living amongst them.

Pretending to be faithful. And Peter here in this passage is talking about false teachers. There's a wolf in sheep's clothing, as the Bible describes it elsewhere.

And he says this, that there were also false prophets among the people. He's just spoken about prophecy, prophets in the Old Testament. As there will be false teachers among you.

[2:30] People who are trying to fit in with the Christians, with the faithful. Who actually are really not. And are trying to lead people astray with false and destructive heresies.

And Peter wants to warn the church that there could be false teachers among them. Just as there were false prophets in the Old Testament.

And he is writing. And this is one of his aims. Chapter 3, verse 17. Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned.

Peter is warning in this chapter. Be on your guard. So that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless. And fall from your secure position.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen. And what I think Peter wants to say to us in this chapter.

[3:41] Is hear the warning. There are and there will be false teachers among you. But don't panic. Because God will deal with them.

And he will keep his people safe. I think that's what Peter wants to tell us. In this chapter. So we're going to see three things. First of all.

Marks of false teachers. A number of things. And there's probably more that I could say. But just to highlight some of them to you. First of all.

They may not be obvious. They'll be like the traitors in the faithful TV program. They'll be in disguise. They may not be obvious.

First one. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies. Secretly. They may not be obvious. Secretly. Secretly. Secretly bringing in their destructive heresies.

[4:40] Maybe it begins with one line in a sermon at some point. One line where they cast doubt on something. Cast doubt on Jesus' return.

Or one line where they cast doubt on whether something is really relevant for us in the 21st century. It strikes me that they're almost operating like a virus.

Where maybe for a few days we feel sort of perfectly healthy. Have no idea that there's a virus within us working within us. And then slowly the symptoms start.

And before we know it we're unwell. That's how Peter sees them working. Secretly working to introduce false and destructive heresies.

Secondly, they deny that God is Lord. Verse one continues. Even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them.

[5:41] Deny that the sovereignty of the Lord over their lives. Seeking to move away from him. Departing from him and his words.

Away from the final authority in his words. And seeking to move others in that direction too. And as they deny the Lord is sovereign over their lives.

They can comfortably introduce false and destructive heresies. Well if the Lord is not sovereign. I can introduce these false teachings. I can kind of say whatever I want really.

If the Lord is not sovereign. Then I have freedom to say that marriage isn't just between one man and one woman for instance. Actually God's a God of love.

And we can love as we please. That's the sort of danger people are in. If they're denying that the Lord is sovereign.

[6:52] Next, depraved conduct. Verse two. Many will follow their depraved conduct. And will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

That they're not really going to be living as the Lord calls us to. Actually if you read passages like 1 Timothy 3. Where it talks about elders, leaders of the Lord's people.

It talks about godly character. It seems to me that these false teachers will be the opposite of that. Living depraved lives.

Next, greedy. Verse three. In their greed, these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them. And their destruction has not been sleeping. Greedy. Greedy for their own gain.

[7:52] For their own glory. Greedy for their own glory. Rather than God's glory. Exploit people. Exploit the weak. The vulnerable. Exploit the widow who has lots of money and managed to get into their home.

And things like that. And maybe they'll make direct appeals of money. And maybe it's going to them.

If I'm ever, or one of the elders are ever standing at the front and saying, we need to raise money. Write out your checks in the name of Daniel Shapala.

Then don't do that. Stay away. Not good. And they're doing it, it says, through fabricated stories. They're appealing to the imagination. Stories are powerful. And true stories are good stories. And actually, chapter one, verse 16, that we looked at last time, Peter says, For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power.

[9:04] No, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. Peter had truth to say about the Lord Jesus Christ. But false teachers are going to come with fabricated stories.

Stories that are not true, but will lead many astray. Later on in the chapter, verse 18, we read this. For they mouth empty, boastful words. And by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.

They'll mouth empty words. Entice people away from the gospel. Entice people away from the Lord Jesus, who was the fount of life.

Away from Jesus and with death. By not following Jesus, by not seeing him as our saviour, that's not life.

[10:16] Their words are empty. They're not life-giving. And verse 17 actually gives a vivid illustration of this.

These people are springs without water. A mist driven by a storm. Think about a spring of water. It's a good thing. It's life-giving.

But what use is that spring if it's run dry? It's dead. It's lifeless. We can't be refreshed by it. And that's what they're like.

And final thing to draw to your attention is false promises in verse 19.

They promise them freedom while they themselves are slaves of depravity. False promises. Promising life.

[11:14] Promising false hopes. Promising freedom. When only Jesus can provide the sinner with freedom. If the Son sets you free, then you will be free indeed.

And so this is some marks that we see in this chapter of false teachers. And there's this very sobering end to the chapter in verse 20.

Of them, the proverb's a tree. A dog returns to its vomit. And a sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.

A dog returns to its vomit. The stuff that its body's got rid of. Why would you return back to that? That's what false teachers are doing.

And that's going to be their sort of end. The turning away from life and turning to poison. A sow?

[12:27] I didn't know. It was a female pig. Oh, sow. Thank you so much. That shows how much I don't know. Thank you. A sow.

Interesting. I'm learning lots about female pigs this week. Washed clean from the mud. But goes back to the mud.

Goes back to the dirty, muddy waters that aren't good. False teachers. As they turned from life in Jesus. To death and destruction.

And they tried to turn others away from Jesus too. These were like stark and uncomfortable words for us to read.

Are they necessary for us to read? Are they necessary for us to read at Calvary Church, Brighton? And we're blessed, I think, by God's grace with good biblical teaching.

[13:30] Do we really need to listen to this chapter? Do we really need to read this chapter? Well, it may be so by God's grace that we are blessed with good biblical teaching.

But we're to be warned. To be prepared for the time when maybe a false teacher may enter into the pulpit here. And also with online stuff.

Nowadays people can access all sorts of teaching. At their fingertips. And we need to be discerning about what we're listening to. And about what voices other people are listening to.

And so we need to hear the warnings. An illustration for you. Just as we may take sort of vitamins to help our bodies be protected from nasty diseases.

Just as every year some of us may get jabbed up with flu jabs. And nowadays COVID jabs as well. We do that because we know the dangers are out there, don't we? We look after ourselves and protect us from the dangers out there.

[14:38] And so that's what we're kind of doing as we come to a chapter like this. We hear the warnings. Protecting ourselves in case that there comes a time when false teachers may be amongst us.

Or people might be influenced by them in the church family. So this is a warning. And he wants, as we've said, he wants to make sure believers are standing strong and not falling.

He wants to offer help and protection when it comes to false teachers. And so we hear the warning. But don't panic. God will deal with them.

There will be false teachers around. But God will judge. And I want to spend most of our time in verses 4 to 10. There's all sorts of places we could go in this passage. But let's focus in on verses 4 to 10.

And Peter takes his readers back to Old Testament history to show us that God will deal with this. Three examples.

[15:44] Firstly, angels. Verse 4. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment.

What's Peter talking about here? In Genesis 6, you sort of read of these sons of God who come and marry women of the earth.

And there it's believed that they are fallen angels who came to sleep with human women. They've rebelled against God.

And of course we think as well of Satan, don't we? Fallen angel and leads evil forces.

Rebelled against God. Peter wants us to be encouraged that God is dealing with them. That they are held in chains of darkness.

[16:50] And they will be judged. Peter mentions these in 1 Peter 3 as well.

And Jude in his short letter as well. If you want to go away and have a read of those passages. But take confidence.

These false teachers, they're doing the same really as these fallen angels. They're denying God being Lord over their lives. They're rebelling against his authority and wanting just to carry people along and give in to all their evil, wicked desires.

They're rebelling against the Lord's authority. And if they're doing that, if they're denying the sovereign Lord over them and believe there'll be no consequences, no judgment, then understandably they'll live that way.

But there is. There is judgment. It is clear in Scripture. And God will deal with them. And so don't think that false teachers are going to get away with it.

[17:57] God is not sleeping. And we can take confidence in that as God has worked in the past.

But moving on, two more examples. Firstly, a time of the flood, verse 5. If 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.

We know, we'll be more familiar with this in the book of Genesis, how God saw wickedness on the earth and was judging the earth by bringing a great worldwide flood.

And those floodwaters came. God is not sleeping. Judgment is coming. And then finally, Sodom and Gomorrah, verse 6.

If 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. Sodom and Gomorrah, God saw the utter wickedness and depravity going on in those cities.

[19:09] And in time, these cities were judged, were burnt. God is not sleeping. Judgment needs to fall and will fall on wickedness, including on false teachers.

Twice in verses 1 to 3, Peter mentions destruction. End of verse 3. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them and their destruction has not been sleeping.

Destruction will come their way. And so in light of God's judgments in the past, we can be confident that God is a God of justice.

And he will condemn to destruction those who are teaching false and destructive heresies. Those who are leading people away from Jesus, away from life and instead to death.

Blackest darkness is reserved for them, Peter says. But where does that leave us? If we had heard three examples of God's judgment on false teaching, what if we were to sit under or ever have sat under the ministry of false teachers?

[20:33] Well, Peter says to God's people, don't panic. False teachers will be dealt with and for his people, he will surely rescue them.

Verse 9, that's the key verse. If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials. And there's two examples in these verses.

First of all, with Noah. Have a look at verse 5 again. If 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.

And then you go to verse 9. If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials. God brought judgment on the earth in the floodwaters, but in that he also brought salvation for Noah and his family.

Noah was someone who was obedient to God's words. It took something like 120 years for him to build the ark. 120 years of warning people of judgment, telling them that the flood's going to come.

[21:48] And you can imagine the stick he would have got from people. Noah seems dry again today, doesn't it? Have you seen the forecast? Why don't

you give that up and come with us?

And some of the false teaching that is going on, as we'll see next time, is scoffers saying, where is the coming of the Lord Jesus? And yet it is coming.

And Noah knew that God's judgment was going to come, that the flood was going to come. And Noah faithfully trusted that God was going to do, as he said, and built that ark.

And the Lord used it to save Noah and his family from those floodwaters of judgment. And so, verse 9, take encouragement. If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials.

And for the other person that he mentions, and maybe this was a surprise to you as we read it, lots. [22:56] Lots. It's surprising that Peter holds him up as an example to us. If you read the book of Genesis, to be honest, he doesn't seem that righteous at all.

Choosing to live away in, I think it was Sodom, it might have been Gomorrah, it was Sodom, a town known for its immorality. He even offered his two virgin daughters up to be raped in the streets. Doesn't sound particularly righteous. But all of us are human. All of us are sinful. And by God's grace, we are being renewed.

And one day we'll be perfect. And Lot was a man who, despite his faults, was trusting in the Lord. Verse 9. No, not verse 9.

Verse 6. If 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, and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless, for that righteous man living among them day after day was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard.

[24:19] If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials. One writer says, although Noah and Lot are worlds apart, in terms of their personal and ethical example, both are objects of God's redeeming and unmerited favor.

Given the fact that Lot's character, based on the Genesis narrative, leaves much to be desired, the readers of 2 Peter can take courage. We're not told to follow the ways of Lot, but we're told to be encouraged.

The Lord will rescue the righteous. And so we can take hope in both of these men, because both by God's grace, we're credited with righteousness, by God's grace.

Some of us will feel like we're a bit more like Noah, faithfully, consistently walking with the Lords, not wandered off in what seems like big ways.

And others of us will feel more like Lot, all too easily entangled in sin. But by God's grace, we are saved. He has rescued us, and we're safe in Christ.

[25:37] And so even if we were to get caught up in false teaching, don't panic. God, by his grace, will surely keep us, his people, to the end.

And we take confidence in him, possibly the last time I read verse 9, if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials.

So God's judgment is coming on false teachers. And indeed, on all wickedness.

But we can find safety, not in the ark, or in escaping from the city, but we find safety in the Lord Jesus Christ. He's taken our judgment on himself.

And that's such good news for us, brothers and sisters, isn't it? And the gospel is so wonderful. There is a judgment, but the Lord Jesus Christ has taken that wrath of God that we deserve on ourselves, and so why make up some other story?

[26:51] Why preach or listen to teaching that is not the gospel? The gospel is such good news. There's no good in saying there's no judgment, live as you please.

Instead, the truth is good news and it's life-giving and it's what's needed. God in love has stepped down into our world, become a human being like us and yet without sin.

Perfect God and perfect man who has faced that wrath of God on our behalf. So we can go free. It's such, such good news. And so take confidence in the gospel.

So hear the warning, this passage says. Be warned about false teachers, false teachers who could be amongst us. Pray for those who preach at Calvary.

Pray that we would be convinced of and love the truth of God's word and would be feeding that to us. And don't panic.

[28:05] They won't get away with it. Judgment is coming and we can praise God that that is a good thing. The judgment will come on wickedness.

let's pray. Father God, thank you so much for your words. Thank you how clear it is.

Thank you that we have this warning from Peter that there will be false teachers. But Lord, thank you so much that you are so good to your people. you will rescue the godly from trials.

And Lord, we take confidence in you and in your power to keep us from stumbling. And help us and protect us, Lord, at Calvary from false teachers.

And Lord, where false teaching is having any effect amongst us, Lord, we pray that you'd help us to be carefully and clearly warning people of it.

[29:11] And Lord, would you, by your grace, help me and Phil and Aaron and Mark and Jerome and Steve and David and others who may be involved in ministering your word to others.

And think of those who teach children in our church family, those who, the women, when they gather and enjoy Bible studies together, Lord, would you help us to just delight in the gospel and to be clear on the truths of your word and not depart from it, Lord.

And we ask this for your glory and in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.