

Remember the False Teachers

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[0 : 00] I want to invite you, if you've got a personal copy of your scriptures, whether on a Bible, in a book, or whether on a smart tablet or a phone, I would invite you to join us.

We're going to be looking in depth at 2 Peter chapter 2 and the time that we have, and so I'm going to be calling your attention to a number of verses.

It may be helpful for you to follow along as I do so. We're going through a series in the letter of Peter to the churches. He is like a bishop writing a letter out of line, and his audience are primarily made up of new believers and young believers, new students of God.

Many of them might have even heard Jesus Christ teach before they relocated into Asia, but they're scattered. They're away from the motherland of Jerusalem, and they're particularly seated in a Greek culture where the Greek philosophy with its myths or its new teachings abound.

Peter is writing to these Christians in these locations, and he's saying, I want you to remember. I don't want you to forget.

[1 : 30] It's not so much new teaching that he's introducing as much as he's reminding. He's like a giant sticky note.

He's like a giant sticky note that you might paste over your refrigerator so that daily or on a regular basis, you would be reminded. Reminded again, not so much of new things, but reminded of the basic tenets of your faith, your core convictions, even the good news, the gospel, the forgiveness of our sin, the abiding presence of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, and our promised future and destiny of a new heaven and a new earth.

This morning, what Peter wants us to remember in chapter two are the false teachers. Remember the false teachers. It's as if he's saying like that proverb, to be forewarned is to be forearmed.

I remember a number of years ago, a friend of mine often traveled to China to do business, and he loved to, on a couple of days off there, go to the Chinese markets, and he promised one time to bring me something in return.

The day came, and on his return, he presented to me a Breitling watch. Now, a Breitling watch is quite expensive.

[3 : 07] The list price for this particular model was over 6,000 pounds at that time. This was a number of years ago. I looked at them just the other day online.

Not that I should want one, but I was curious as to the current value. These watches go upward of 50,000 pounds. Quite a watch. I certainly felt awkward wearing it because I've always had a very inexpensive Casio plastic watch band watch.

Very disposable. That was a high-class watch. I told him I felt a little uncomfortable and self-conscious wearing it, and he said, oh, don't worry.

It's a fake. He said, everything in the Chinese market are fakes. I brought you back a fake watch. It looks like it on the outside.

And he said, the only way to tell is if you could look on the inside. When you look on the inside, you'd know it's a fake in a moment.

[4 : 15] Well, I knew it was a fake in less than six weeks because it failed to keep good time. And so I put it away. Peter's main thought in chapter 2 here of 2 Peter is this.

God loves you enough. God loves you enough to warn you about fakes. It's a beware sign, chapter 2 is.

Or if you're in my neighborhood, as I'm learning how to practice for my driving test, it's the big L sign plastered on my trunk saying you might want to pay attention when you're driving near this guy.

Peter is saying God loves you enough to actually give you a warning about fakes. Now, as I read earlier, some of you might have been taken back by the graphic language of condemnation, destruction.

As they have done harm, harm will come to them. Peter is a bit angry. As Dick Lucas says, as only he could say, Peter is a concerned and angry pastor because he sees young Christians being deliberately muddled.

[5 : 49] This is as if Paul saying in 2 Timothy 4, there is a time coming when many will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into this.

Peter doesn't want them to wander off. Peter does three things in chapter 2. He communicates three thoughts to them.

First of all, he says, be aware of their falsity. Be aware of the untruth of the false teachers. Be aware that they're false.

Secondly, he says, be ever assured. Be assured of their fate. Don't simply look at them now without a thought toward how they end or how they're teaching and those that follow them will end.

And then third, be aligned with the faithful. There is some good news, and we'll see that in this passage as we near the end of the message, that there is a promise of God and all encouragement from Peter to be aligned with those who are faithful, despite being surrounded by false teachers.

[7 : 14] And we are surrounded. We need to be aware of that. Be aware of their falsity. Peter says in verse 1 that there are false teachers among us.

Now, this can seem shanty. And I want to assure you that at Glasgow City Free Church, as well as Hope Community Church, there are no false teachers among the Bible teachers, the Bible preachers, or the elders, or any of those who have a Christian testimony or are in a role to instruct, guide, direct, or teach from God's word.

But it doesn't mean that we don't keep an eye out. It doesn't mean that we don't take this very seriously. John Calvin, looking at this very passage, said this, While it may shock us, the Spirit of God wants to communicate to us that the church will never be free in this life from internal torment, from this internal torment.

Peter here is not saying that there's simply a false teacher inside of their home church. But there are those that are false teachers in their community around them.

It could be that they're false teachers in a denomination, or there are those who are in church roles of other churches and leadership who are influential upon us.

[8 : 59] But Peter is saying you need to be aware of their falsity. They are present. I read this week about, on one of the many blogs that I received, one of the questions was asked, How do you win a street fight?

Now, I assure you, I don't plan on getting in a street fight ever, but I was curious to what this expert said. How do you win in a street fight? He commended the example of Miyamoto Mishai, who is the greatest swordsman ever of Japan.

And he told a story of how Miyamoto was on a boat that they were ferrying across a river, when a drunken bully, recognizing him as a great swordsman, began to taunt him, and began to question his swordsmanship, even his manhood.

He challenged him there in the boat to a fight, to a duel. Miyamoto said, I don't want to fight here with all of these passengers, but there is a nearby island.

The boatsman, steer to the island. The boatsman came up onto the island. The bully immediately jumped off. The Miyamoto, the great swordsman, turned to the boatsman and said, Depart.

[10 : 27] They immediately left the bully by himself on the island. Peter, throughout chapter 2, this is if he wants to isolate on an island by identification, these false teachers, these seducers, these bullies who are thinking only of weak and gullible, young in the faith, that they can capture them for themselves.

Peter says, rather than go simply head-to-head and debate doctrine to every doctrine, let me identify them. Let me isolate them on an island so you will recognize them in their coming or whenever they appear in your midst.

I would list seven out of many. I've counted almost 30 characteristics, but there are seven general characteristics of every false teacher.

Let me just highlight a few of them and then move on. Highlighting them again so that you'll be aware of false teachers, so that you won't be left to your own paranoia or suspicion.

Is that a false teacher? Is that a false teacher? Peter clearly identifies them. First and foremost, he says, In verse 1, the second part of the false, they'll secretly introduce heresy.

[11 : 55] The word there is they'll smuggle it in as if by night. Heresy, the word for heresy is choice. They'll give you a choice. But that choice is either going to deny a claim of Christ or a truth of God, or it's going to minimize it.

And he's saying, here's the test. As they smuggle in these choices for you to take, look and see how they stand on the Lord Jesus Christ.

They will deny even Jesus Christ, who they would say at one point, redeem them, purchase them.

The language is right out of the slave market. To say a master who has redeemed and saved another person who now becomes their servant, they will deny that.

Ask them questions. Look with a careful eye. Are they those that, how do they feel about Christ? How do they feel about Christ's claim on my life, my body, my life's meaning, purpose, direction, our possessions?

[13 : 18] This is particularly handy when the cults are at a door, or when a place was someone from the Mormon church or Jehovah's Witness. How do you stand on Jesus Christ?

Secondly, secondly, he tells us in verse three, that they're greedy teachers, and they exploit you with stories that they've made up.

Here, he's telling us that they actually have an ulterior motive in mind, that they're actually, later he will refer to Balaam and his donkey.

What a wonderful story that we have in our scriptures about how Balaam would actually, quite sadly, he would only look at the scriptures and God's word being dispersed for his own financial profit, and that God would actually rebuke and challenge him even from the mouth of a donkey.

So, Peter's saying, that's one way to watch them, is, are they, are they writing a book? Are they quick to sell something? Are they inviting you, like the prosperity gospel, to sow a seed of faith and send in a check?

[14 : 37] Where do they stand on money? Where do they stand on you and money? A third characteristic out of seven is verse 10.

We find that they're desire dominated. He said, they follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature. In essence, in a word, it means that they seek to please themselves.

He says that there's a test for this one. He says, they follow their corrupt desires and they despise authority. In other words, human appeal or even God's guidance, they would shun.

They're their own authority. They're their own boss over their possessions, their heart, their mind, their body. And they follow their own selfish desires.

Another characteristic, we find in verse 11 and 12, that they're bold in their blasphemy. Now, this can be a strange one unless you realize that in the small epistle of Jude, which is intricately linked to 2 Peter, some have even held out the possibility that they may share the same author.

[16 : 02] But in Jude 9, he brings up a count to say that the angel Michael, this very mysterious account behind the scenes of where, when the angel Michael came on a mission of the Lord to retrieve the body of Moses, there was a fight over Satan about the body.

Don't be distracted. Peter's point here is saying that the angel didn't begin to accuse or rail against the devil. He simply said, rebuke you, and he left.

And he says, false teachers are so bold, so audacious, that like Kenneth Copeland out of Oklahoma recently called down curses upon the coronavirus as a demon, they feel like they're experts on all spiritual matters, both on earth and in the heaven, and that they can control them.

another characteristic is that they are, in verse 14, they have eyes full of adultery, or in other words, in the literal, their eyes are like that of an adulteress, meaning that they look upon you as someone that they desire to seduce.

Verse 14 says, they're experts in greed, the word expert being a term for training in the gymnasium, an athlete's training.

[17 : 35] In other words, they're experts in seduction, and they're always looking like an adulteress for someone else to seduce. C.S. Lewis would describe it this way.

In his short book called The Screwtape Letters that was at one time a BBC broadcast, Screwtape is a senior demon talking to his nephew, Wormwood, and he's talking at this point about the differences of those subjects that the demons, how they see people, and how God and the Lord sees people.

He says, we want cattle who can finally become food. He wants servants who can finally become sons.

We want to suck in. He wants to give out. We're empty and we want to be filled. He is full and flows over.

In other words, a false teacher can be recognized. We can put them on that island. We can spot this person not by fighting them or engaging them, but we can spot them by recognizing that they look at you as a product, as merchandise, even as prey for themselves, not for our benefit or our soul's benefit.

[19 : 08] Another one is in verse 17 and 18. I'll simply mention that they are empty. They may have grand words, but like a well without water, they're empty springs, and that can spell disaster to us.

It was a tragedy to the eastern travelers. They came upon a well or a promised spring, and there was no water for themselves or animals.

It could literally be a matter of life and death. That's what Peter says. Peter says they don't care for you. They care more about themselves. In fact, everything they're trying to sell you and promote to you not only has their best interest in mind, does not have your best interest in mind, but it could result in your death, your soul's death.

Peter is warning us in very graphic terms. Finally, he says in verse 19, the last characteristic out of the seven that I would use is they promise freedom while they're chained up as slaves themselves.

They may promise all sorts of freedoms from sin patterns that trouble us, from worries that we have, from sinful addictions that have overwhelmed us.

[20 : 29] They may promise that all the while being chained to those very things themselves. They don't have a cure. They don't have a rescue.

Indeed, they stand as men, women, false teachers in need of rescue. And yet, many people, particularly the gullible, will be won by their sirens call for freedom.

There's life, I think, particularly in America, though it is worldwide now. I think, particularly in America, how we have so many TV evangelists who will promise prosperity, health, well-being, and they promise these things, enriching themselves, but there is no freedom for the very things that we need, and that is sin.

There's no freedom from that that binds them. Now, I spent a lot of time on this, and I won't spend very much time on the final two points, because that's the main thrust of this passage, is to warn us about fakes, to warn us and to help us identify these false teachers that have nothing to do with them.

But be mindful. Peter is warning his congregation and his listeners, his readers, even us, like the Lord, out of a pastor's heart.

[22 : 07] He's warning us because he loves us, because he loves us so much, he doesn't want us to be taken unawares.

I think about the apostle Paul on the shore as he began to leave Ephesus, and he gathers up the elders in Acts 20 on the shore.

And just prior to getting on the boat, he said, men, wolves are going to come into the flock when I leave. In fact, they may very well arise from some of you men, and I hope there was a large crowd there, but from some of you own men, they may very well arise.

But remember what for three long years, even with tears, I have sought to teach you and to remind you to remember.

That's a pastor's heart. Jesus Christ himself said that in the last days, in Matthew 24, that there will be false Christ and false prophets, and they would deceive were it possible, even the elect.

[23 : 24] Why does he tell us that? Because he has a pastor's heart, and he wants to warn us to not go down that heart-aching path. He wants to also, I think, as mature Christians, encourage us how to pray, how to pray for those, particularly those young in our faith, in our church, and in our sphere of influence, how to pray for them, how to be of similar encouragement, how to assist them to recognize truths from falsehood.

Peter tells us one helpful thing to remember is always be assured of their end, of their faith. He tells us that in the second part of verse 3, where he says, there, that their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and destruction is not asleep.

it's watching. He tells us in verse 13, particularly, they'll be paid back with harm for the harm that they have done.

He brings out three if examples. In verse 4, he says, if the angels who had sinned did not miss condemnation and being jailed, if, in verse 5, if the world, filled with godless men, did not miss condemnation and destruction, if, in verse 6, the cities of sexual perversion of Sodom and Gomorrah did not miss destruction, be assured that though it takes time, that destruction and that condemnation is awaiting an end.

you see, there's a principle in scripture that we need to ever be mindful of. Throughout the scriptures, we see that punishment does not immediately follow rebellion, that sometimes there is, or oftentimes, there's a delay, but that doesn't mean that the destruction or the judgment is any less real.

[25 : 45] There will come upon for God's patience, and by his sovereign design and time, destruction and condemnation will be made out those who are rebellious, who deal falsely with him, and particularly those who treat with false teaching his little ones.

Lastly, Peter tells us some really good news. He says, not only be aware of their falsity, not only be assured of their faith, but he says, be aligned with the faithful.

And he points out two who are faithful. He says, in verse five, Noah was faithful. He was a righteous man.

That means not that he was a good man in and of himself, but he had put his faith, his confidence, his trust, his life, and his heart in the hands of the Lord, and he followed God.

He made the right decision, the right choice of his life, and so he lived on the basis of that faith, and it reflected in righteous actions, so much so that he was known as a preacher with a great witness.

[27 : 06] We can imagine with one hand swinging the hammer through years of construction, this huge bark, and on the other turning to catch the attention of one of his neighbors, that he didn't have to be this way, that this ark was the promised rescue for destruction, and would they come along?

Noah was a faithful witness despite being locked. Cannot imagine. It was not days or weeks or months, it was years perhaps of ridicule and mocking.

Peter says, can you align yourself with him? Is your faith such that it can withstand mocking? Do you have a faith or is there knowledge of your witness even that some, maybe family, maybe friends, maybe a neighbor, that they've placed you in that category of a Christian and they see you as small-minded or they see you as silly or even naive?

Noah was a righteous man and he was mocked. Peter says, you can endure that knowing what your own promised end is.

Secondly, he said, remember a lot. he shows us a lot in verse seven. He shows us a lot who is both troubled as well as distressed.

[28 : 37] He's in pain over his society and culture and its morals around him. I had a friend some time ago who was a pastor and depressed.

I had heard from a friend that I would do well to visit him because he was depressed. I visited him and found him in his church office and I began to talk with him.

He certainly had a heaviness, a melancholy about his spirit. I asked him if he were depressed. He said, no, I'm not depressed, not for myself. He said, I'm grieving and lamenting over my community, my country, and my world.

There had just been so much news, so much more news about how our country and our nation, even our world, was sliding in to an immoral abyss that he felt distressed.

He literally felt pained and overwhelmed about it so much that he began to grieve. Are you distressed with our current culture?

[30 : 01] Are you distressed with our country? Peter could say, that's actually in alignment with those who are of the faith, saying, this is not the way God designed it or his plan.

God longs to redeem this world. God will judge the able-doer and the godless, but in as much as there is yet time, by your life, communicate your witness like Noah, and also by your prayers, your distress for the country and the world that we live in.

Mark 9, I mean, I want you to mark verse 9 as the gospel. Mark 9 is the gospel in this passage.

The Lord knows how to rescue godly men. He does, doesn't he? We're not, we can't sit and point a finger at false teachers, falsity, even the rejection of the Lord.

We can't point a finger at them without realizing that we once, we're like them, and left to our own way, we would be false teachers serving ourselves as well.

[31 : 23] We would be those that without a care would speak like experts to all spiritual matters on this earth and even in heaven to our favor. But we have a Lord who has rescued us even from the midst of this falsity, even from the culture.

The Lord himself has rescued us and redeemed us from the trials that we face. He did so by coming and facing not only the taunts but the nail of false teachers.

He came and he took the destruction that was due to us, rightfully so, that awaited us in the future. He took that upon himself.

He rescued us, he rescued us and we became his. Now, Father, we ask that you would take this passage and that you would seal it to our heart, that we would remember false teachers, their faith, and we would ever live as those who are faithful to your Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen.