

Deception & Destruction

2 Peter 2:1-3

Intro

As we move into **2 Peter 2** this morning, Peter will begin to focus on his primary concern in this short letter — and that concern is the danger of *false teachers*...

- Because *false teachers* — *of whatever variety* — are the most dangerous people on earth...

They are so dangerous because they not only endanger a person *physically* — they also endanger a person *spiritually*...

- And this danger extends beyond this life and into the life to come...

To see something that the Lord Jesus spoke on this subject would you please turn to...

Matthew 23:13-15 (NKJV)

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”

- This is the ***primary danger of false teachers*** — false teachers pretend to lead people *toward God* but in reality they are leading people *away from God*...[expand]

With this in mind, would you turn back to 2 Peter 2 as I read the passage that we will be studying this morning...

2 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV)

1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

*Now, I do not have a outline for this study but I do want to draw your attention to the primary themes that are found in this section — the themes of **deception** and **destruction**...*

deception — *the act of causing someone to believe something that is not true, typically in order to gain some personal advantage...*

destruction — *the action or process of causing so much damage to something that it no longer exists or cannot be repaired...*

These are frightening definitions and they highlight the importance of this topic...

- The reality is that **spiritual deception** leads to **spiritual destruction** — and this is not something that can be ignored...

Now, to remind ourselves of the context of our passage, let's look back at...

2 Peter 1:19-21 (NKJV)

19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

So, in these verses Peter has been focusing on those who communicated God's Word by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit...

And it would be wonderful if the story simply ended there...

It would be amazing if only God's word was spoken — if only **true prophets** held the microphone...

- Unfortunately, wherever the truth is spoken, **false prophets** are quick to move in and distort the Word of God...

*Notice what Peter writes at the beginning of **2 Peter 2:1**...*

1 But there were also false prophets among the people,

false prophets — *those who, acting the part of divinely inspired prophets, speak falsehood in the name of God...*

As you read the Old Testament, you will notice that false prophets were always a real problem for the people of God...

- Wherever a true prophet of God sought to share God's Word with the people, false prophets came along to spread their lies...

God spoke of this in...

Jeremiah 5:30-31 (NKJV)

**30 “An astonishing and horrible thing
Has been committed in the land:**

**31 The prophets prophesy falsely,
And the priests rule by their own power;
And My people love to have it so.
But what will you do in the end?”**

Now, the problem of false prophets has been plaguing mankind from the very beginning...

- In fact, this problem goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden...

You see, in the Garden of Eden God spoke to Adam — God told Adam the truth about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil...

We find this encounter as we turn to...

Genesis 2:16-17 (NKJV)

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Unfortunately, the original false prophet — the Serpent — the Devil himself, came on the scene and spread his lies — we see this in...

Genesis 3:1-5 (NKJV)

1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;

3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

And we understand that this is where the battle lies — that this is where the battle has always been...

The battle between ***the true*** and ***the false*** — the battle between what ***God says*** and what the ***enemy says***...

Please turn back to 2 Peter 2:1 as we continue on...

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you,

Here Peter is warning believers to be on the lookout for **false teachers...**

Just as *Israel* had to deal with **false prophets**, so the **Church** will have to deal with **false teachers...**

false teachers — *those who pretend to be Christian teachers but in reality teach false doctrine...*

Now, please notice here in vs 1 that Peter says that **there will be false teachers among you...**

- This is a promise to the Church — and it is not a promise that we want but it is a promise all the same...

So, if **false teachers** will be among us then we must be wise and and discerning...

We must realize that no teacher is above our honest scrutiny — we must be diligent to follow the example of the Bereans in...

Acts 17:11 (NKJV)

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Now, it is important for us to know the the Word of God for ourselves if we are to guard ourselves against false teachers...

- [expand — read the Bible / listen to solid Bible teachers / read books that are theologically sound / interact with fellow believers who are seeking the truth...]

Another danger we must face is the fact that there is a **false teacher** inside each one of us...

- We each have it in us to create false doctrines that fit our own fallen desires...

But we must fight these sinful desires because false teaching always ends poorly...

Proverbs 14:12 (NKJV)

**There is a way that seems right to a man,
But its end is the way of death.**

Continuing on 2 Peter 2:1 we read...

there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies,

Here we see the **deception** of the false teachers as they are **secretly** bringing in their **destructive heresies**...

- In other words, **false teachers** *do not let you know that they are false teachers*...

Instead, they bring in their false teaching as if it is a good thing — as if it is something that is helpful...

- [ex. The Devil in the Garden of Eden...]

Paul warns us about these false teachers in...

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (NKJV)

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.

14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

So, Peter warns us that false teachers deceptively bring in destructive heresies — false teachings that lead to destruction in one way or another...

- [ex. unbelievers will continue to be led astray — end up separated from God forever // believers will experience destruction in the form of broken relationships and a loss of usefulness...]

Either way, false teachings always destroy — they break people down instead of building people up...

Next, Peter tells us that these false teachers are...

even denying the Lord who bought them,

The idea is that these false teachers are denying the Lord Jesus because of their false beliefs...

- And this denial is occurring even though the Lord Jesus **bought them...**

*The words **bought them** is a very interesting phrase and it brings up an area of debate among Christians...*

And the question is this, did Jesus die for the sins of **all people** or did He die only for the sins of **those who will believe?...**

- Now, those who believe that Jesus died for the sins of **all people** believe in **unlimited atonement...**

And those who believe that Jesus died only for **those who would trust in Him** believe in **limited atonement...**

Now, it is important to understand that this is a familial debate...

In other words, true believers may find themselves on opposite sides of this issue...

- With that said, I believe that the Scriptures teach **unlimited atonement...**

I believe that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross is **sufficient** to provide forgiveness for all but it is **efficient** only for those who believe...[expand]

*And here are a few verses that I believe support the doctrine of **unlimited atonement**...*

John 3:16-17 (NKJV)

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

John 12:32 (ESV)

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

Romans 5:18 (NKJV)

Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

1 Timothy 2:4-6 (NKJV)

4 [God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

6 who gave Himself a ransom for all...

Hebrews 2:9 (NKJV)

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

1 John 2:2 (NKJV)

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

As we consider these wonderful verses, the great tragedy of these false teachers comes into view...

The Lord Jesus died for them — forgiveness was available to them...

- But they denied the Lord Jesus — they rejected the relationship that the Lord Jesus offered them.....

This reminds me of what we read in...

Matthew 23:37 (NKJV)

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”

Tragically, the false teachers that Peter is referring to are just like those in Jerusalem who rejected the Lord...

And as we read the end of 2 Peter 2:1, we see that the end of these false teachers is terrible...

and bring on themselves swift destruction.

destruction — *the state after death wherein exclusion from salvation is a realized fact, wherein man, instead of becoming what he might have been, is lost and ruined...*

It is the same word used in...

Matthew 7:13 (NKJV)

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it."

Now, please notice that these false teachers that Peter is writing about ***bring on themselves* swift destruction...**

- This destruction is not what the Lord wanted for them — it did not have to be this way...

In fact, we see the heart of God on this issue in...

Ezekiel 33:11 (NKJV)

Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

We also read these words of the Apostle Paul in...

Acts 17:26-27 (NKJV)

**26 “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,
27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us...”**

Tragically, these **false teachers** chose *against* the Lord and if they failed to repent then they would suffer **swift (sudden) destruction..**

And once they died in their unbelieving condition, all would be lost...

Hebrews 9:27 (NKJV)

...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...

Now, as we move into 2 Peter 2:2, Peter warns that false teachers will have many disciples...

2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

Here we see two tragic consequences that are brought to pass by these false teachers...

1) As false teachers are on their way to eternal destruction they will lead others into either temporary or eternal destruction as well...[expand]

destructive ways — *lack of self-restraint which involves one in conduct that violates all bounds of what is socially acceptable; insatiable desire for pleasure; includes sexual immorality...*

- [expand — most (if not all) false teaching involves an element of sexual immorality...]

2) The false teachers cause the truth of God to be mocked...

blasphemed — *spoken of in a disrespectful way that demeans, denigrates, maligns...*

In other words, false teachers cause the truth of God to be treated in a *dismissive* and *disrespectful* way...

- [ex. false teachers on the internet...]

*And as we move into 2 Peter 2:3 we see some of the **behaviors** that identify false teachers...*

3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words;

First of all, we see that false teachers are **covetous** — they are greedy for gain — they always want more...

- [ex. the lavish lifestyles of false teachers...]

Secondly, we see that the false teachers support their covetous lifestyle by **exploiting people with deceptive words**...

exploit you — *lit. make merchandise of you...*

- [ex. Church growth book that referred to people as “giving units” — false teacher who passed around buckets for offering...]

We see here in vs 3 that false teachers exploit people by the use of **deceptive words**...

deceptive — *being mentally constructed without a basis in fact; artificial, false, hypocritical, deceitful; words easily shaped as desired...*

- In other words, false teachers will say whatever they need to say to get your money...

With this in mind, would you please turn to...

1 Timothy 6:1-16 (NKJV)

1 Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed.

2 And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.

3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,

4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,

5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

13 I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate,

14 that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,

15 which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

Ultimately, true teachers can be content with their portion in this life because they realize that their reward is not to be found in this world...

We see this as we turn to...

2 Timothy 4:1-8 (NKJV)

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

And I love the way that the Lord Jesus said it in...

Revelation 22:12 (NKJV)

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."

As believers, we don't have to be self-seeking in this world because our reward is not to be found here...

- The Lord Jesus has our reward and He will give that reward to us when the time is right...

If you would, please turn back to 2 Peter 2 as we wrap up vs 3...

By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

In other words, these false teachers will not get away with their evil practices...

Though they may profit in the short term, judgment is on the way...

And I appreciate the way that the scholars of the New Living Translation rendered 2 Peter 2:3...

In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed.

This is the reality of the situation — unrepentant false teachers have only the fearful expectation of judgment to look forward to...

And this is what Peter will cover next as we continue to make our way through chapter 2 next week...

Conclusion

So, as we close, I encourage you to continue studying the Scriptures so that you might guard yourself against the **deception** and **destruction** of false teachers...

Let's pray...