

## **The Final Word**

Week Four – 2 Peter 2:1-9

Two themes resonate throughout Peter's second letter. The first premise is that God will judge false teachers who deliberately pervert the truth and reject the Lord Jesus Christ. The second theme is that God is able to rescue His people. "The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment" (2 Peter 2:9).

False doctrine had begun already to make serious inroads into the early church. Peter had this in mind as he penned his final message to the body of Christ. In this section of Peter's letter, he warned his readers against the lies and onslaught of false teachers, brandishing their own version of the truth. False teachers, masquerading as Christians, were not above using personality, programming, or persuasive speech in order to deceive those outside the faith and draw away new converts from the truth of the Word of God. They typically target spiritually-interested people (typically unconverted church members) as well as new converts or those who are not fully disciplined.

### **I. The Danger of False Teachers – 2 Peter 2:1-3**

The truth has always had enemies. Peter's concern about the rise of false teachers was justified. False prophets arose after God brought Israel out of Egypt, attempting to subvert the truth which God had revealed through His especially appointed and anointed servants. God reserved swift and sure judgment for all those who proved to be false prophets. Deuteronomy 18:20 says, "But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die."

"Just as there arose false prophets alongside the true prophets of God in OT times, so also there will arise false teachers who will try to mislead the church" (*The ESV Study Bible*).

False teachers were especially dangerous in the early church as the embryonic nucleus of new believers were attempting to become established in the true knowledge of God. With few resources and a limited number of mature believers to carry the leadership roles, the early church was especially on Peter's heart as he faced his own mortality.

Today, in our culture, how much more should we be on guard against the pervasive nature of false teaching? We live in a world that willingly tolerates

lying as an acceptable mode of doing business from politicians to publishers, from advertisers to athletes, and from businessmen to the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker. Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, doctor, lawyer, Indian chief seem to all have been given a pass to skate by on a lie if deemed necessary. We overcome the false narrative of the enemy with the Truth of God's Word!

“The word for “false teachers” occurs only here. It was not merely that they were in error regarding some relatively minor or controversial issue. We all make mistakes and, as time goes on, abandon positions we once held because we have obtained more light upon the subject. Thus, Aquila and Priscilla taught the eloquent Apollos the way of God more perfectly, he being in error on the subject of baptism (Acts 18:24–26). Peter had in mind something far more serious than that. The men he opposed were men who *deliberately* distorted or denied the truth of God” (Phillips, John. *Exploring the Epistles of Peter: An Expository Commentary*).

The truth has always had enemies. Peter's concerns for the church were valid, based on historical facts and his understanding of Satan's tactics. And “many will follow their sensuality” (2 Peter 2:2). False teachers throughout history have been marked by sexual sin, dishonesty, and/or a desire for financial gain. Buying into their “destructive heresies” makes it easy to indulge sensual desires and sin while pretending to practice an outwardly religious life.

## **II. The Destruction of False Teachers – 2 Peter 2:4-8**

Peter assured his readers that truth has always had its enemies, but God will judge these heretics without mercy. False teachers will ultimately be condemned by God, “their destruction is not asleep” (2 Peter 2:2).

Peter uses three Old Testament illustrations of God's dealing with apostasy:

- A. Peter first mentions angels. “God did not spare angels when they sinned” (2 Peter 2:4). If God has eternally condemned angels who sinned, then how much more certainly will He condemn false teachers and their captive followers.
- B. God “did not spare the ancient world” (2 Peter 2:5). If God did not spare the ancient world, He will surely judge the false teachers.
- C. God “condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction” (2 Peter 2:7). The fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah pictures

(foreshadows) the final judgement at the end of the age. If God condemned Sodom and Gomorrah He will judge the ungodly who reject the gospel.

### **III. The Preservation of the Saints – 2 Peter 2:5-9**

“The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgement” (2 Peter 2:9).

Peter uses the OT story of Noah. Noah was “a preacher of righteousness” who lived in an exceedingly wicked day. Not only did God judge and destroy the wicked, but He saved the righteous (Noah and seven family members) from the day of wrath. Noah is an example of the divine balance of God’s mercy and His judgment.

Lot is another example of God’s mercy in the midst of His judgment. The judgment of God was about to fall upon Sodom and Gomorrah. He sent two angels to warn Lot and his family of the impending judgment and allowed them to escape the total nihilation of the two cities.

Peter is clear. God He will judge the unrighteous, but He knows how to rescue the godly from temptation. How does He rescue us from temptation (an enticement to sin) in this present age?

“We must evaluate everything we hear and read through the grid of God’s Word. To be able to recognize the deception, we must be well-acquainted with the Truth” (The Final Word p. 79).

We must have a working knowledge of God’s Word. Not just as a church-goer receiving a steady diet of Bible teaching and preaching, but as an intentional Bible student daily pursuing the things of the Lord. We know to understand Satan’s tactics “so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Four Stages in the Strategy (based on gleanings from Evans, Tony. *Victory in Spiritual Warfare*):

- A. Desire – There are four stages in Satan’s strategy of spiritual warfare. The first stage begins with desire. Desire is not sin. The enemy takes a legitimate desire and perverts it, appealing to the lust of our flesh and creates the potential for sin.

B. Deception – Satan plants a sinful thought in our minds. Because Satan does not have the power of creation, he has to maximize the potential of deception. He has turned deception into an art form. He is the master chameleon.

C. Disobedience – If we fail to take the sinful thought captive, refuse to act on it, and ask Jesus to crucify it, we will sin.

D. Death – Not physical death, but spiritual death. Satan’s temptation in spiritual warfare is to cause us to miss out on the goodness of God, leading us onto a path of destruction. Sin produces death in a variety of ways, all of which diminish our ability to experience God’s promise of the abundant life. Sin does not break our *relationship* with God; it breaks our *fellowship* with Him, which makes us ineffective as believers who have been designed to experience God and to glorify Him in all we do. Satan’s goal is to render us useless and unfruitful for the Kingdom of God. He does this through a strategy of taking a legitimate desire, tempting us and guiding desire down a path toward sin, and making our lives void of the abundance Jesus has promised us.

“Victory in spiritual warfare involves intimacy and identification with Jesus Christ to such a degree that His will reveals itself as the dominant force in our own will. That is the difference between victory and defeat. Only when God’s will direct our lives are we then also equipped with the power to do what He wills us to do. God promises to give us this power if and when our will aligns with His. But to do this requires faith that God knows what He is talking about. The opposite of faith is not doubt. The opposite of faith is disobedience” (Evans, Tony, *Victory in Spiritual Warfare*).

Beloved, we must remember that Satan, although he is currently very active in our world today, is a defeated foe. By the cross Jesus deactivated, dismantled, and disarmed Satan. He remains a powerful enemy, but he no longer has authority over us. The only power he can wield over us is when we fail to recall whose we are and give into the enemy’s enticements to sin. Beloved, resist the devil. Stand firm in your faith against Satan and his schemes (see 1 Peter 5:8). But “do not be afraid, little flock, for [our] Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). Rejoice beloved, the cross has the final word!! Satan is defeated and Jesus is our Victory!